

A PHILOSOPHY OF SOCIAL PROGRESS

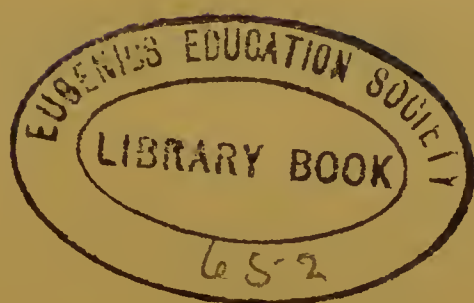
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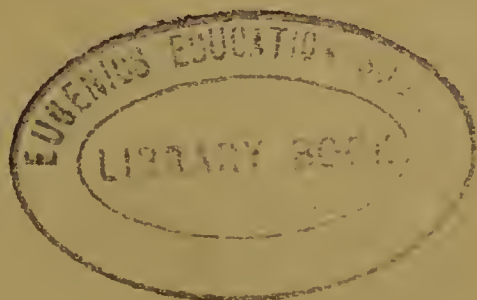
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of view is of real value not only to students of social problems and social conditions, but to all citizens who are interested in the life and the complexities and the changes of their society. It has seemed to me possible to heighten the interest of both students and citizens by suggesting to them some of the lines of thought and inquiry which most general sociologists follow; and I have attempted to do this in the earlier chapters of this book. These chapters are not likely to be of any use to the professed sociologist—perhaps of little interest to him, except in so far as they contain much that is open to criticism. But they are not written in order to be a contribution to his knowledge of the subject; and the method of exposition is intended to be, if not exactly popular, at any rate closely enough connected with the concrete facts of modern life to appeal to the interests of any intelligent reader.

My second aim is quite different. All through the book, but especially in the later chapters, there will be found a very marked antagonism to the current conception of a general sociology, or science of social phenomena. Closely linked with my desire to introduce students to the sociological point of view is the even stronger desire to show them that sociological science is and must remain a very partial aid to the understanding of our social life; that it is and must be subordinate to a philosophy of that life which passes boldly beyond the domain of any science; and that the true explanation, as well as the justification, of social change must be sought in the philosophy and not in the science. To establish this position is the deeper aim of the book; and

in this, if anywhere, will lie its value as a suggestion to the professed sociologists. They are not likely to agree with me ; they, and with them the exponents of various special social sciences, will probably regard me as a foolish and perverse heretic, led astray by an illusory metaphysic. And, unfortunately, the philosophers are likely to find fault too ; for the position which I take up is, to say the least of it, rather alien to our traditional philosophies. Consequently I shall appear as a traitor, though perhaps only a feeble traitor, to both camps. So be it. My only regret is that the point of view which I consider vital has not yet found a champion better qualified to expound it.

I will make bold to state my heresies dogmatically. Sociology is commonly described as the science of social life. I do not believe that there is or can be any science of social life ; nor do I believe that sociology is or can be a science. There is a little scientific knowledge of some few of the conditions under which we socii live, of some few of the activities in which our social life is manifested. What passes for sociology is a collection of generalizations of very varying value ; and it is inevitable that most social generalizations shall be at once more or less dignified guesses, and more or less disguised expressions of the hopes and fears, the prejudices and beliefs, of their originators. There may, however, be a philosophy of social life—or rather, of social change ; but this will be transcendental, of course, and will always be very closely analogous to a religious faith. It will vary from age to age, just as the forms of faith do ; that is to say, the expression of its dominant conceptions will vary,

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and the emphasis laid upon them. For it is, after all, nothing more than the elaborate expression of our faith in the reasonableness, the sanity, and the significance of the life we lead, the activities we worry about, the relationships in which we find ourselves enmeshed, and the institutions in which we put our trust. And all these vary with each age, compelling variation in the philosophical explanation of them.

So far as the discoveries of special social sciences are established, the social philosopher will respect them and use them as far as they will take him. Consequently my treatment involves a combination of sociology and social philosophy, though with an admittedly unorthodox attitude to both. And the philosophical unorthodoxy is the cause of the sociological heresies. For if, as I do, we regard the individual as essentially supra-social, then we must regard social life and society as a temporary condition of his development—a process over which he has, or may have, a mastery, because of his supra-social nature, not a process of which he is the natural product. It follows further that we must insist upon the spiritual element in social progress as transcendently important; and herein lies the attitude which may offend most philosophers, just as it will certainly alienate all the sociological followers of Comte. For it will now be apparent that my fundamenal assumption turns my philosophy into a kind of religious faith quite as surely as it denies the possibility of a true science of social phenomena.

And yet, while the position I have taken up implies a general attack upon the Comtist tradition in sociology,

it implies also an admission of its value. For we may still regard sociology as the expression of our growing determination (due to fuller knowledge) to include wider and wider groups of causal factors in our attempted explanation of any social fact or social evil. Once it was enough to trace an evil to "sin" or to the will of God—an explanation which we can probably never supersede, but can certainly amplify with advantage. Even to-day there are some social observers who trace all evil to weak will and faulty character—again an explanation which we cannot discard, but which is a little too vague and dangerously open to misinterpretation. Both explanations belong to what Comte called the theological and the metaphysical stages of thought. The modern spirit, far more positive and rational, cannot be content with anything so simple, but carries analysis in all directions until it connects every social evil with a hundred different strands of physical, vital, and mental causes. And the modern spirit is entirely right in this. The positive stage necessarily follows and amplifies the metaphysical and the still earlier theological stages of explanation, and a scientific view of social causation results. The one mistake of the Comtist lies in the assumption that the positive stage *displaces* the others, and can stand alone as furnishing a full explanation. This is never possible; and the sociology which comes into being as the result of the great increase of positive knowledge at our disposal must turn back to both religion and philosophy for an interpretation of the real significance of all the processes which it reveals.

It is usual to acknowledge one's debt to writers and

thinkers, especially living writers and thinkers, from whom one is conscious of having derived much help. I hesitate, however, to mention any names, lest I should offend the very people I would like to thank by seeming to saddle them with some responsibility for opinions from which they may most vehemently dissent. But I cannot refrain from expressing my gratitude to two sociologists—Professor L. T. Hobhouse and Mr. A. F. Shand—who have been kind enough to read through the whole of the book, and make many valuable and suggestive criticisms. And I must also express my thanks to three writers to whom I am indebted for both ideas and language used in particular passages: to Dr. E. A. Ross, for the account of the “perversity” of civilisation, in Chapter III.; to Mr. Victor V. Branford, for the description of the unity of the medieval Church State, in Chapter VI.; and to Dr. Bernard Bosanquet, for the conception of the content of Greek citizenship, in Chapter VII.

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A PHILOSOPHY OF SOCIAL PROGRESS

INTRODUCTION

CONCERNING THE AUTHORITY OF SOCIAL SCIENCE AND SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY

SOCIOLOGY is sometimes called the science of social phenomena. The term "social phenomena" includes anything and everything which human beings, other than Robinson Crusoes, feel or think or suffer or do or desire or achieve. Other than Crusoes, we say; and by this qualification we limit our attention to those activities which are really social, and not the activities of a quite separate self. Even so, we are left with a wide enough field, for every activity is social which affects other people or is affected by them. My thoughts, as such, are not a social phenomenon, any more than my headache is; but if I expound the former to an audience, or take the latter to a doctor, or worry my family with either, then they become social phenomena. My anger or fear or delusion is not a social phenomenon. The manifestation of anger or fear in a company of *socii*, the spread of a delusion among

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the members of a social group—these are social phenomena. Falling in love and changing a creed are individual activities and private concerns, at any rate at first, and in part. But loves and beliefs are social phenomena as soon as they pass beyond the separate individual's heart or head ; and their origin is social too. The sociologist has nothing to do with my hopes and aspirations, in so far as they are mine ; but then they are never only mine ; and they become legitimate subject for his speculation in so far as they are derived from or reach out to other people. Even the aches and pains which seem to be wholly mine may be matter for the sociologist to deal with as forming part of a tendency to pain among social beings : the waxing or waning of headaches and toothaches may be as much a social event as the increase or decrease of insanity or crime. There is, in fact, no event in the life of any social being which may not have some significance as part of a social process ; there is no event, therefore, in your life or mine which the sociologist may not legitimately take note of and use for the building up of his conclusions.

This, then, is the scope of sociology, or the science of social phenomena. But in what sense shall we regard it as a science ? Certainly not in any ordinary sense ; for science demands a limitation or abstraction of subject-matter, in order that the relation between some clear causes and results may be worked out. And the physical or vital or mental phenomena with which science deals admit of this limitation or abstraction ; we can separate them into groups distinct from other

groups without losing any of their value or their significance as typical phenomena fit for scientific analysis. The astronomer can examine the stars without paying any attention to political events ; the meteorologist can trace the course of a cyclone without caring whether or not it will spoil our holidays. Now the social phenomena or facts of social life also admit of abstraction or separation into limited groups ; but not in the same way. The moment we abstract them we lose some or all of the value and significance which we wish to examine or explain. Every social fact is the result of innumerable causes working together in infinite complexity ; and it can very seldom be separated from the whole of its complex setting without losing its real meaning as a social fact. This is one of the all-important differences between social phenomena and the phenomena with which every true science deals. The latter can be dealt with quite satisfactorily in a very limited setting ; we can get all the explanation we need by connecting them with a limited number of pertinent causes. We can deal scientifically with the weather without paying any attention at all to the feelings and conduct of society : the meteorologist does not care whether we go to church or stay away because it is raining. But we cannot explain the feelings and conduct of society without taking the weather into constant account. The movements of sun and moon, the growth of tree and plant, follow their appointed courses serenely independent of human life and its struggles. But the movements and growth of human beings are conditioned at every turn by the action of sun and

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moon, by the life of plant and tree. A social fact is thus totally unlike a thunderstorm or a comet or the growth of a vegetable: we cannot explain what we chiefly want to know about it without reference to innumerable elements of the surrounding universe, animate and inanimate, social and non-social, some of which are always beyond our observation. Especially is this true of the definitely social surroundings of any social fact. Even if we could leave out of account the phenomena with which all other sciences deal, we most certainly cannot disregard any items of the antecedent or concurrent social life by which all social facts are conditioned. That is to say, we cannot get at the value, the meaning, the real significance of the social fact as it affects us and as it operates in the whole process of social change, unless we treat it in relation to *all* the elements which enter into our complex life as social beings.

Nevertheless, there are various groups of social phenomena which may be abstracted and regarded separately, very much as groups of the phenomena of the physical universe may be separated from other groups, and so form the subject of a science.

We may, for example, isolate the facts of birth and increase of the population and its quality as healthy or unhealthy; and so reach scientific knowledge of causes and effects of much practical value,—as is done by the science of eugenics. Or we may consider separately the facts of wealth-making, or the production and exchange of wealth,—as the science of economics does; or the facts of sympathy and antagonism of feeling and

idea among associated people,—as is done by social psychology. Each department so marked off gives us a social science ; and each social science is valuable—within its proper limits. It is both important and useful to know that certain physical and mental elements can or cannot be transmitted from parents to offspring, and that the production of healthy and capable children depends very largely upon certain conditions of parentage and heredity. It is important and useful to know that ordinary human beings working to get a living or to increase their wealth can produce more by observing certain methods of associated effort or of free exchange, and that such effort and exchange are subject to certain invariable conditions. But no social science of any department of social phenomena is decisive in the sense of being in a position to dictate to us the necessary or the best lines of conduct. We go to each for a little help ; but the question, “How shall we live well?” is never answered by any science. And it is clear that no list of separate sciences can cover the ground. There are as many departments of social phenomena or activities as we choose to make—of varying importance, of course, but all of some importance. We pick out a few and elevate them into the subject-matter of a special science, deserving of careful study, because they seem to us for the time being to count for so much. This is what we have done in the case of the facts of wealth-making and health-making instanced above. But the tissue of our social life is made up of innumerable strands ; and all count, all are important, all are significant,

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all contribute something to the general weal or woe. Changes of feeling, of belief, of aspiration (which we can seldom separate or classify into departments), are as mighty factors in the building up of our welfare as any changes in the quality and quantity of our population or our wealth ; and all are incessantly working together in the social process. To the exponent of each social science his own subject-matter and its discovered laws seem all-important ; and there is this at least in his favour, that, unless his group of facts had been of real importance, it would never have been brought into prominence by the selection of the social instinct. But the eugenicist, or the economist, or any other specialist is a student of a little bit of an indefinitely complex whole ; and what he knows is subject to the vast unknown. To our incessant question—What shall we do to live well ?—his special answer is never more than a suggestion to be weighed carefully ; it is not a scientific edict to be obeyed at all costs.

It has been necessary to insist upon these limitations of sociology and the social sciences, partly in order that the reader may not expect too much from them, partly, too, that he may understand why and how the philosophy of social life carries us beyond the findings of science. The latter is concerned with causal processes ; traces these wherever discoverable, and states them as laws for us to use as best we can. But philosophy deals with the *significance* of the processes and their results in relation to an ideal scheme of life. Any set of our activities may be treated scientifically, with greater or less addition to the sum of useful knowledge ; but no

set of our activities can be *interpreted* by science if it forms part of our struggle towards an ideal which gives their significant quality to the activities. Social philosophy attempts this interpretation; and for this reason we separate it very distinctly from science, and ally it with religion; for it involves a strong conception of a master aim and master plan of our life; a fervid idealism is the core of it; its essence is to lay hold of a dream of a City of God; and to make all its reasonings, all its linkings of effect to cause, all its groupings of change under the laws of sequence or causation, dependent from beginning to end upon the spirit and purpose of the dominating ideal.

The definition of a social philosophy so conceived will mark its difference from a science of society. It is an attempt to present social phenomena as an ordered system or process dominated by a purpose which gives to the whole and all the parts their true significance. But it presents nothing dogmatically; it has no discoveries and proofs which the ignorant must accept; none of its assertions are meant to be beyond the criticism of the merest beginner. The social philosopher elaborates for us a coherent scheme which gives a meaning to the social process—the meaning which he no doubt finds truest and best. But into the making of it there has entered the bias of his own mental and moral nature and experience; of his own spiritual attitude. We may take or leave his interpretation as we will, elaborating it more fully if we accept it, elaborating our own in opposition to it if we reject it.

CHAPTER I

SOCIAL LIFE AND ITS PROBLEMS: THE REFORMER'S INTEREST AND THE SOCIAL PHILOSOPHER'S INTEREST. THE SOCIAL PHILOSOPHER'S POSITION EXPLAINED.

MODERN sociologists, and still more social philosophers, are not yet quite free from an inherited tendency to walk with their heads in the clouds, and deal with great matters rather far removed from our immediate social interests. But a reaction is setting in. Just as the economist of to-day is paying far more attention to actual unemployment and underpayment than to the economic harmonies and abstractions which interested his predecessors, so the social scientist is taking up one by one the concrete problems of poverty, and applying his science to the practical elucidation of their cause and cure. The reaction is to be welcomed, and I gladly range myself on the side of the new tendency—but with one warning. There is a danger of assuming that the social problem has its existence wholly in the lower strata of our society; that it is simply a problem of poverty, a problem of the slum, a problem of the submerged tenth; and that we may be satisfied to confine our investigations to those

parts of the social whole in which the evil is most obvious. This assumption is entirely misleading. Every social evil runs right through society from end to end—only with this difference, that the sharp end of it is usually found at the bottom, where the resistance is weakest and the suffering greatest. It is there, no doubt—among the under-paid, the under-fed, the under-housed, the under-cared-for—that treatment is most urgently called for ; but it is not always there that the chief causes will be found. And if our investigations are to be worth anything, we must consider our society as a single unity, not as a bundle of segments which can be examined separately. We are not confining our attention to problems of destitution ; our aim is to understand something of the problems of social evil and the ways in which these may be changed. But, with this proviso, we will gladly fall in with the modern tendency, and take our starting-point from the quarter in which the pressure of difficulties is hardest and the manifestation of evils most obvious. In other words, we will begin with the city slum.

Let us walk down a mean street together—you, a kindly citizen, and I, a would-be social philosopher. To the eyes of both of us there appear the sordid sights inseparable from the life of the poorest strata of a civilization which does not know what to do with its dregs. A horde of ill-clad children, some pinched and ill, all falling short of full health and vigour, as of the cleanliness which is one condition of health ; their mothers, lounging wearily about the doorways, or talking shrilly to each other about their husbands' eternal

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misdemeanours or their neighbours' equally flagrant delinquencies,—poor overburdened mothers, whose lives have little room for rest, little scope for joy; here and there a loafing man, workless through his own or his betters' fault; at each corner the keystone of satisfactory British life—the beer-house, whose patrons hail from almost every tenement in the street, often spending their last shillings in support of our staple industry; over all the strange, heavy, listless thickness which, even on the sunniest day or in the liveliest hour of Saturday night, seems to hang over the meanest of our city streets. Such are some characteristics of the scene which meets us—you, the kindly citizen, and me, the would-be social philosopher—as we pass down any one of the overcrowded, forgotten blind alleys of our modern city life. And if we assume that you are not only kindly but also unaccustomed to the scene and observant of any new thing, then it is quite certain that you will turn to me and ask me why, in heaven's name, we do not sweep all this reproach away; why we do not feed and clothe these children, give the people space and air and clean homes to live in, leisure and opportunity to use and enjoy something better than the public-house; why we do not stop their habits of squabbling and sordid scandal-mongering, the laziness of the loafers, the drunkenness of the sots, the gambling of the fools, and a thousand other very obvious and detestable evils. Why do we not alter it all, as resolute people could, and as honest people would, if only they saw and felt it vividly enough?

And then I, as a humble social philosopher, will

give you the answer which every thoughtful student of social life is bound to give (though how far the answer is very important we need not settle now). These people and all about them—all their life, with its good and bad—are results of complex processes which began far back in the past and certainly will not stop to-morrow, which ramify through all our national life, forming part of the vast social process in which and by which humanity lives. To put it quite simply : They are the results, first of all, of forty million people on a small island, getting a living in dirty ways from coal pits and iron mines and resulting steam factories, in a given stage of civilization—by which is meant the power to make natural forces yield us what we want. In other words, they are subject to certain laws of pressure, certain conditions of nature and contrivance, certain limitations of space and material, from which no existing thing can escape. Hence, in part, the dirt and poverty and overcrowding and want of leisure which you deplore.

Further, they are, like all living beings, subject to certain laws of increase of population, of struggle, of selection of fitter or stronger, of survival of individuals and types, and also to the laws of growth and change to which all living things must conform. Hence, in part at least, these teeming thousands of children, this continual dying off and suffering of many, this survival of strange, unpleasant, self-assertive types (savages often, fitted for a savage life), side by side with pleasanter, gentler types ; hence, too, much of the want and sickness among the weaklings.

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Again, unlike other living beings, they are subject to the special conditions of feeling and thought which belong to human beings with their strong spontaneous loves and hates, ideas and reasonings, together with their power of communication, of self-criticism and other—criticism, of purposing, planning and achieving, and many other attributes which mark the group of primates which naturalists call *hominidae*. And to these psychical attributes of humanity are to be traced, in part at least, many puzzling characteristics of conduct and feeling, of passion and sympathy, of desire, aversion, and impulse, of cunning self-seeking and of kindly generosity.

Yet again, they are all part of a living, organic unity, with grades of service and enjoyment, of hard work and leisure, with necessary functions to perform in necessary ways, some pleasant and some unpleasant. And this unity, which we call social life, imposes upon them innumerable other conditions—forms of social control, ranging from custom or fashion or prevailing opinion, to codes of law and of punishment, and a host of subtler influences drawn from the fact of ordered social contact. Hence, in part, this strange patchwork of life—this street of overworked factory operatives close beside a street of professional or business men with leisure and opportunity to live cleanly; and the still stranger fact of our general acceptance of such incongruities. Hence also, in part, all these modes of behaviour in each grade, from the habits of drink and blasphemy of the few to the patient endurance of many, from the institution of the gin-shop to that of the school

and church, and a thousand other items of the tissue and fabric of social life.

And finally, unlike any creatures we know, these people have souls, and know it. They are related to unknown realities and powers, dimly conceived and in strange forms, but always conceived in some form or other; they are conscious too (dimly again) of a purpose, duty, destiny, of a possible upward path, a possible better state of themselves, a possible heaven. And hence their fits of remorse, their resolves to be different and do differently, their individual and collective strivings after something better than they yet know, their visions of an ideal which shall some day be made real.

Here, then, is your problem. You ask for a quick change of all this squalor and degradation, this neglect, apathy and injustice; and heaven knows change is needed quickly. But first learn what it is you are dealing with, what is the material on which we are to set to work.

The people whose lot we are to alter—and we, who are really inseparable from them—are all members, as it were, of five different universes, each with its own conditions of existence. In all five universes we live our lives, subject at every moment to the laws of each, to the limitations and powers, the helps and hindrances, which the conditions of each universe impose or grant. First, and least important, there is the material universe of which we are a part, with its conditions of force and energy by which our powers are circumscribed, and also, by right use, enlarged. Secondly, there is the

universe of living things, with its laws of life and growth, of health and disease, of birth, development, decay and death, from none of which we can escape, and all of which must be learned and obeyed. Thirdly, there is the universe of human minds, with its special laws of feeling and thought, sympathy and repulsion, planning and achieving. Fourthly—and very closely connected with the third—there is the universe of social units, in which are brought to bear all the laws governing the life of a homogeneous, co-operative, organic society, of whose tissue and structure we all form part, in a mutual dependence from which there is no escape, each affecting all others by every action, each drawing from the whole much of the stuff that makes our conscious life, much of the significance that makes our life worth while. And lastly, though far the first in importance, we are all part of a spiritual universe, to whose laws of soul-growth our souls are subject, from which we draw all that is best in our resolves or aspirations, our living faiths and our determinations to find the good.

Perhaps these characteristics of our complex nature, this complexity of the material with which every reformer has to deal, may be summed up by describing ourselves as spiritual, social, human, living beings—each word standing, though in reverse order, for one of the five universes to which we belong.

And now we may define the social philosopher's point of view. The true social philosopher is he who sees, behind every social problem, the necessary conditionings and possible opportunities derived from each of the five universes in which our life is set ; and who

applies himself to the task of learning all that he can discover of the forces and laws of each universe. I call him the social philosopher, rather than the sociologist, because he alone can take into account all the conditions, and so grasp the significance of the whole process which we call social life. The sociologist (rightly, as a man of science) confines his attention to four only of the five universes, omitting the spiritual as beyond his scope. The social philosopher goes hand in hand with him so far, glad to learn from him the knowable conditions of change ; but passes beyond his range for the final understanding of the meaning and aim of the process. But both are alike in this, that in every social problem—whether of the slum or the factory, of the sweated worker or the rich waster, of ill-health, or injustice, or criminality—they see a many-sided problem in which very different elements are combined, all acting and reacting on one another in unsuspected ways ; they see also that in dealing with every problem certain fixed conditions are set, within which alone the problem can be attacked. Both believe, too, that many of these conditions are knowable ; that they can be discovered by the methods which science follows ; and, therefore, that reform can, to some small extent at least, have the sureness which scientific knowledge gives. But, perhaps, most of all are they both alive to the complexity of every problem. Every reformer comes armed with a besom to sweep away a particular abomination—the filth of the slum, the demoralization of the public-house, the degeneration of neglected children, the cruelty of sweating, overwork and under-employment, and a host

of other obviously preventible curses. But you cannot sweep away any one thing without upsetting innumerable other things, good, bad, and indifferent. You cannot get your besom of cleanliness into the slum, or of temperance into the public-house, without also disturbing some of those old social habits which we call vested interests, rights of property, and other more or less excellent things. You cannot improve the health of the children without altering in strange ways the tissue of family life, the accepted duties of parenthood, perhaps the sacred institution of marriage as now maintained, to say nothing of a less sacred wage-system. Perhaps it is good that any reformer's broom should disarrange much of his neighbours' houses—without his intending it in the least: we may always need more disturbance than any single reform contemplates. But, at any rate, it is as well that we should realize, as far as we can, that at every step this and that and the other reaction will probably follow; and it is the province of the sociologist and the social philosopher to teach us a little of this. It may be that they cannot teach us very much; whatever we do we shall have to take on trust numberless items of unknown effects—as we have to do in every step of our individual lives. When we get married, or choose a new house, or change our diet, we take a big leap in the dark; but we are uncommonly foolish if we do not focus upon the action all the glimmers of light which experience of life or the sciences of medicine and sanitation may offer. So with our social ventures. The light of a little knowledge is held out to us in separate rays by various observers and

sifters of experience, such as the economist, the eugenist, the biologist, the true historian (not the court storyteller), the political scientist (but not the politician), the jurist, the moralist, the psychologist, the educationalist, and others. It is the business of the sociologist to focus as many of these rays as he can upon this or that problem considered as a whole, and upon the general process of social life and change. In doing so, he increases our illumination, not only by the act of focussing the rays, but by drawing new light from observations of his own. We are fools if we do not use the light he offers. But this does not mean that we are to look to him for full guidance ; and the foolishness is his if he expects that we shall ever wait until we have complete illumination, or ever be persuaded that he is or ever will be able to light up all the path we have to tread. For all his help, we must still blunder along, sometimes in defiance of what he thinks is made clear ; but we will gratefully look with care at all he has to point out, and avoid the manifest pitfalls which he really is able to discover for us.

And this marks the point at which the social philosopher parts company from the sociologist. To the former, the explanation of every process, the resolution of every difficulty, the justification for every step onward, are matters demanding something more than scientific knowledge—for the very simple reason that the elements of our life include (as the most important factors) something which is not subject for scientific analysis or inquiry at all—in the sense in which science understands them. The man of science may attack,

with greater and greater success, four of the five worlds by which our life is conditioned ; but when he treats them, as the sociologist must, as a single complex conditioning whole, it is clear that his knowledge of the conditions will be too partial for much dogmatizing. And the fifth world eludes him altogether, for its conditions are neither physical, nor vital, nor psychical, nor social—and, therefore, do not fall within the purview of science as now understood. Yet it is they—these conditions and forces of a spiritual universe—by which the whole of human life, even in its physical and vital aspects, is modified and controlled.

Enough has now been said to explain in outline the points of view of the sociologist and the social philosopher. But the reformer is probably dissatisfied. No doubt it is an excellent thing to be alive to the complexity of every social problem, to realize that every social situation, present or to come, depends upon innumerable forces, in this world and beyond it, some obvious and some latent and unsuspected. But what use in knowing this, if we can never learn enough about the causes of social good and evil to enable us to act surely and decisively ? Why not be content to register the fact that full scientific knowledge of social processes is beyond our grasp—and then go on to do our best under the guidance of common-sense and conscience and brotherliness ? Sociology, it would seem, is but a rush-light, of little use to guide us through the dark forest of social and industrial tangles in which we are enmeshed. Our plain duty is to cut our way through as best we can, bold in the confidence of good

intentions and the belief that all honest effort brings progress somehow. But your sociological considerations are not only of little positive value, but will operate negatively as a check upon strenuous endeavour. Where zeal for reform is urgently needed, they do but induce a kind of paralysis, an attitude of "non possumus," which are the very worst enemies of improvement and the safest props of selfish privilege. You admit that you cannot, as sociologist, tell us plainly what to do to stop the abominable miseries which form so deep a fringe round the many-coloured garment of our civilization. Yet you bid us pause before we act, and consider the situation in all its bearings. If you cannot tell a man in a burning house how he may safely make his escape, at least do not urge him to sit still and "consider the situation in all its bearings." Let him shut his eyes and jump with all the boldness he can command—even if he does break a leg. And let us reformers take our leaps in the dark boldly too, since confidence is the condition of success.

The reformer has a strong case: may his daring never grow less! He will find, perhaps, that his robust views are not in the least at variance with the philosophy of social progress, whatever some social scientists may say. But for the moment we are concerned to justify the reasonable sociologist; and it is not really difficult.

Science is not valueless because it cannot cover all the field of life. In all groups of phenomena, however complex, it is found that certain big causes stand out clearly, producing certain big effects. These effects may

be modified, of course, in countless ways by the interaction of other causes ; but, whatever the modification may be, they will always be present if their known causes are present. This is the basis of all science ; it is this fact which gives value to the discovery of any "law." Fire burns and heavy things fall to earth, and these are laws of transcendent importance—although I may not be able to tell whether the fire you are now trying to light will burn up or fizzle out, nor whether the picture you are now hanging will fall or stay firm. And in some of the groups of phenomena which form the setting of our social life, and the obvious conditioning of many of our activities, the same fact holds good. Certain big and constantly recurring causes stand out, always producing certain big effects ; and by knowledge of these "laws" we can safeguard our actions to some extent at least. We *know*, for instance, that good drains will lessen certain diseases—whatever else happens—and make a population so far healthier. We do *not*, therefore, know whether the population so protected will be more or less virtuous, more or less energetic, or anæmic or gouty or prosperous. We just know that it will suffer less from typhus, cholera, and a few other dangerous diseases.

We *know*, again, that long hours and low pay are causes of, and will usually produce, inefficient workers—whatever else happens. We do *not*, therefore, know whether a more leisured and better paid working class will be more contented or more revolutionary, more or less pious, and a thousand other important things. We merely know that they will exhibit less of a definite

kind of inefficiency which results from the discovered causes of overwork and a low standard of living.

We *know*, again, that healthy parents produce children with healthy bodies, and that unhealthy parents, as a rule, do not. But we do *not* know whether the children produced under strict eugenic conditions will be gentler, kinder, wiser, or the reverse.

Now, all these are simple examples of sociological knowledge, or science ; and this knowledge is always of some use to us in our actions. We are glad that it is available, glad to learn as much of it as we can, glad that it should increase. If it acts as a check upon some of our enterprises, we are grateful for the check—or ought to be. Yet it does not *determine* our actions: it only safeguards them against definite dangers, circumscribes them within limits of comparative safety.

Within these limits we have still to choose our aim, and determine for ourselves the direction in which we shall move. But here, too, the social scientist may claim some right of dictation. We know—as the result of long experience and observation—that certain forms of choice and willing are disastrous, and that other forms are more salutary, if not actually necessary to any sort of welfare. This is the foundation of all morality ; and, though it is not easy to find a scientific basis for ethics, resembling, let us say, the scientific basis of mechanics, we may at least assert that one general law of social action is scientifically established—which we may call the law of benevolence. And by this means we are able to establish a kind of touchstone or test of effort and of direction, by which we can

approve or condemn certain tendencies. Thus we may be said to have scientific grounds for preferring co-operation and brotherliness (as methods of social behaviour) to self-centred struggle and aggressive competition ; peaceable activities to warlike ; altruistic to egoistic ; and so on.

But this addition to our scientific equipment does not carry us far ; does not, in fact, do more than define a very little further the limits within which our searchings and strivings after the good life shall be made. All the science we have, all that we can ever hope to command, will do no more than rule out of court certain methods of behaviour, and establish certain conditions for the attainment of this or that partial aim or end. The determination of the general social aim, of the direction in which, moment by moment, we shall collectively choose to move—this is not subject for science. This determination depends always upon the whole complex of forces which together form the vital impulse of any society, and of these forces, physical, vital, psychical, social, and spiritual, one set at any rate—the last—is beyond the reach of science. The wise social philosopher knows that the spiritual forces, which lie behind the reforming impulses and determinations, and which are of the essence of the will to reach out to and attain an ideal, are far mightier than any of the natural forces with which science has to deal—very much as the really religious man knows that faith can remove mountains, though the engineer doesn't believe it, or at any rate does not take the fact into account.

But we need not dwell now upon this aspect of the

sociologist's limitations. The latter may, and probably will, deny the fundamental assumption I have introduced; it is safer therefore at this stage to meet him on his own ground. And the point which I am labouring is this: that sociological science (including every ancillary science which can possibly be brought to its aid) can never be in a position to say to us: "This you must do," or "This is best for you to do." And one of the reasons is now clear. Scientific knowledge is decisive and authoritative in regard to action when the end in view is definitely known and capable of clear definition. For the man who wants to build a bridge or cure a squint the science of the mechanician or of the doctor is rightly dictatorial. But for the individual who wants to improve his lot, or for the society which wants to reach a better social state, there is no such science. In social life there are no definite, limited, clearly definable ends, for all ends or aims, even those which seem most obvious and certain, are relative to the indefinable and ever-changing general ideals by which we are animated, and derive their qualities and their significance from these.

For the benefit of the impatient sociologist, and the no less impatient reformer, let me explain this rather obscure matter a little more concretely. The reformer, I imagine, is prepared to tell me that it is sheer quibbling to assert that there are no clearly definable ends or aims to which our efforts may be confidently directed. The slum which we passed through together proclaims aloud a dozen desirable ends—healthy and well-fed children, a city of homes in place of a city of

dirty lairs, a reformed public-house, a shorter working day, and so on. Surely there is nothing indefinite or qualified about such ends as these? The social scientist too, has his instances ready, whether as eugenicist or economist or medico-sociologist or what not. Are not health and abundance and a vigorous race very definite and certain good things? If we know the conditions upon which these depend, can there be any reason at all (apart from crass obstinacy) why we should not go straight ahead and get them, without stopping to talk vaguely about a general social ideal or unknown spiritual impulses?

A strong case, my friends—but on the surface only. I grant you that we are very certain about some items in our aim, and about the conditions of insuring the attainment of those items. We not only know that sound drains and sanitation lessen typhus, but we are all very sure that we want typhus to be abolished. We may take it, therefore, that the abolition of typhus is a quite definite element—a negative element—in any general well-being or any social end at which we may be aiming. But we cannot say this of any of the larger and more positive elements of well-being to which we give such apparently definite names as health or wealth or security. Social well-being is made up of innumerable ingredients, each of which is dependent upon all the others for its quality of value as part of the good end. We delude ourselves when we think that we can separate and define apart any one of the ingredients. This is the constant error of the dogmatic social scientist—especially of the economist and the eugenicist.

We want wealth, it is true ; but qualified by what other conditions ? in what setting of other elements of a social state ? We do *not* want wealth side by side with more worldliness, more worship of mammon, more concentration upon material satisfactions. Nor do we want increased wealth accompanied by diminished sympathy, gentleness, patience ; nor wealth in a setting of deadening security. We want health, also—all of us ; but again, how qualified, and with what concomitants ? To be more robust, more vigorous, more immune from pain and disease—this is all good ; but not perhaps at the cost of many subtle intuitions and feelings, or of many æsthetic appreciations and powers, or of moral aspirations, or of what, for want of a better term, we call spirituality. Is it not clear that, to the simple question, “Do we want health, wealth, comfort, security ?” we are bound to answer both yes and no ? We want them all—but not on these or those terms, not in this or that setting, not with this or that qualification. And so even our most obvious separate ends turn out to be, by themselves, indeterminate, elusive—only definable in their full relation to a complete and complex social good.

A fortiori this general social end or good, to which we give the name of happiness or well-being, is indeterminate and indefinite too. It is one of the conditions of humanity’s growth to be always defining and re-defining the good at which it aims, always giving new content to its vague conception of a better social state. And the process by which it does this is partly an instinctive process of vital change, partly a semi-rational process of

purposive progress, partly a process of idealizing which—whatever else it is—is certainly not scientific. And the whole process (at least in the higher human stages) is conditioned by all the forces of the five orders which we have provisionally distinguished as the physical, vital, psychical, social, and spiritual.

We have now cleared the ground of some misconceptions and illusory hopes. We will not expect too much of sociology. It is not a science of social life, for there cannot be such a science; but it is a growing body of scientific knowledge concerning some of the conditions under which social life is lived. We will not expect too much of any separate social sciences. They cannot be determining sciences of separate departments of social life and activity, for social life has no separate departments or ends, but is a single complex whole related to a single complex aim, in which all separate parts and aims are qualified by relation to all other parts and aims. But each separate social science is a growing body of knowledge concerning some of the conditions under which particular and definable elements of a social state may be obtained—such elements being only *desirable* if accompanied by numerous other elements lying outside the view of the separate social science considered. And finally, in order to get, not full explanation and guidance, for both are impossible, but a rather less incomplete explanation of the forces at work in our social life, and of the significance of those forces and of the processes which result from them, we must pass beyond sociology to a philosophy of social progress, in which, at any rate,

all the factors may be gathered into a single scheme or system.

Enough has been said for the present about the value and the limitations of social science and the separate social sciences. But a little must be added to make clearer the aim and interest of the social philosopher, as contrasted with those of the practical reformer on the one hand and those of the social scientist on the other; and also about the special elements of social life upon which his attention is chiefly fixed.

The reformer finds himself face to face with a *fact*—any fact of the slum upon which he has seized—let us say, the under-feeding of the children. He sees this fact in close causal relation to other facts, such as under-employment or drink or parental neglect or the community's apathy; and he is concerned to alter one or more of these causal facts as quickly as possible, in order to alter the dependent fact of under-feeding.

The special social scientist is face to face with a complex process of causation and development connected with the particular group of facts which he has taken for his province. The social economist, for example, sees the fact of under-feeding in relation to a complex process of work and wage, of production and exchange; in relation also to an equally complex structure which he calls the industrial system, whose growth and changes condition all our under- or over-satisfactions. The medico-sociologist, again, sees the same fact in relation to complex processes of organic life, dependent upon numerous social conditions of

hygiene, protection and care of the young, etc. To each of these any proposed change or remedy opens out at once very far-reaching issues, involving long chains of cause and effect within the limits imposed by the special subject-matter of their sciences. Within these limits, each has quite enough to think about ; and the questions raised by the suggestion of change take the form : How will the step affect this or that special process, this or that special habit of action, this or that institution, this or that relationship ?

The general sociologist and the social philosopher have no such limits to their field of phenomena, and each must try to regard the fact of under-feeding in its relation to *all* social processes, habits, institutions, and relationships, whether economic or vital or political or legal or educational or any other kind that may be named or unnamed. In other words, they have to consider the effect of any proposed change upon the whole structure and tissue and process of society—upon all kinds of activities, institutions, and relationships, in which the movement of our social life is expressed. Clearly, then, it is necessary for us to give a definite meaning to the terms by which we vaguely describe this subject-matter of the philosophy of social life.

Let us begin by defining *society*. In the simplest sense, we mean some kind of group, held together in some way for some purpose, whose members are somehow related to one another with reference to that common purpose. But this vague description would include both a pack of wolves and a board of directors of a trust or combine. Let us add, therefore, that the

group must be more or less permanent or stable, as well as human. This might still include the board of directors, at any rate in a country like China, where such offices would probably be hereditary. Yet they would not be a society or complete social group because the bond between them is only a partial one, and an artificial one. It would not necessarily have any effect, for instance, upon the family life or the citizen life of the members. We need in some way to express the fact that the membership of the true social group affects or tends to affect the *whole* social life of the members; or, in other words, tends to affect *all* their relations to one another. Consequently, in order to make our definition of society or *a* society complete, we must re-state it in this form: Any stable human group which possesses a common end or purpose, and the membership of which affects or tends to affect *all* the relations of the members to one another.

Within such a group an infinity of events is continually taking place, events of action, feeling, and thought; as well as events of external nature, producing constantly changes of structure, of relationship of the members to each other, of custom and habit, of feeling, attitude, idea, and tendency. This vast process of events is the *social process*; and the events themselves, with all their consequences, whether quite transitory or crystallized into more or less permanent things such as social institutions, are the *social phenomena* whose significance the social philosopher seeks to discover. But not every event occurring within the group is a social phenomenon. Every phenomenon has many aspects;

and we are concerned only with the social aspects. An earthquake or a toothache are not social events in themselves ; but some aspects of them may be social. An earthquake in Manchester and a toothache in the Cabinet during a political crisis are emphatically social events, having a very decided social significance. And we may define *a social phenomenon* as any fact or aspect of a fact which cannot be explained or described without reference to the action of group members upon one another, or without reference to social relationships.

But in order to explain more clearly what is meant by *social relationships* and *social institutions*, it is necessary to go more in detail into our account of social life.

Everybody stands in very numerous relations to other people—as brother or sister or parent, as neighbour, friend, fellow-citizen, fellow-workman, and so on. Some of these relationships are more important and more universal than others, and can be divided off into separate classes. Thus there is a very distinct and important group of relationships based upon the facts of birth and growth, which may be called our vital relations ; another group based upon our everyday work and business—our industrial and economic relations ; another derived from the constitution and government of our State—our political relations ; a fourth based upon religious belief and worship ; and numerous others which may or may not have distinct names. And in addition, there are a few relationships based upon omnipresent factors or processes of social life, which cannot be divided off into departments, though they may be considered separately ; such are the moral

relationships based upon the fundamental facts of neighbourhood and social contiguity; and the psychical relations inseparable from a community of minds in close contact.

Further, in each distinct group of relations the individual appears in a special aspect—as father, mother, son, or daughter; as employer or employee, wage-earner, buyer, seller; as ruler, elector, councillor, tax-payer; as member of a church or mission or sect; and so on.

Thirdly, to each group of relationships there corresponds a more or less distinct set of social activities in which each member takes part, such as the family or clan activities; the economic activities; political activities; activities as members of a church; and the like.

Fourthly, to almost every distinct class of relationships there corresponds a more or less distinct class of institutions. Thus we have the institution of the family and of marriage; the market and the wage system; the constitution, the Government, Parliament, Local Government; a national Church and an established religion; and so on. And this, perhaps, makes clear the meaning of the rather puzzling term "*social institution*." It may be taken to mean any recognized and established embodiment, whether concrete or abstract, of some system of relationships or some method of social activities. We say "whether concrete or abstract" because some institutions appear to us or are thought of as concrete, while others are plainly abstract. But in reality every social institution is abstract, just as a system of relations is abstract; in other words, its

abstract meaning is the real essence of it, not the concrete form it may take. Thus it is not the market or the law court as something concrete, but the implied system of ideas and principles which is the real institution we call by the name ; it is not the Parliament or the Church or the school or the family regarded as a number of people related to one another for some special purpose, but the system of government or religious life or of education or of vital social grouping which is the essence of the institution in each case.

Here, then, is our subject-matter : society, with all its processes and phenomena, with all its structure of institutions and relationships, with all its members and their activities. All the institutions, relationships, and activities are capable of being regarded in separate groups or in special aspects, and each group may form the subject of some special social science. Several such groups and aspects have already been set apart in this way, and special social sciences formed to investigate them, because they have seemed to be of pre-eminent importance. But any number of such divisions might be made, for there is no limit to the social activities or relationships or institutions. Sociology, as the general social science, is bound to take as its field the whole of social life, and to attempt to explain the whole social process ; but, as we have seen, this explanation can never be given scientifically, partly because the forces and conditions to be taken into account are unlimited and never fully known ; partly because the whole process is related to an end or aim which is never determined or defined, and never can be.

Social philosophy boldly takes the same unlimited field for its province, and, without pretending to explain scientifically the causal processes at work in our social life, endeavours to present the whole of that life as a single process, whose significance is derived from its relation to some end or coherent system of ends; endeavours also to make clear the significance and value of every group of activities, relations, or institutions, as part of a single system of activities, relations, and institutions, which can and must be conceived as having a definable meaning for all of us. It distinguishes also between the scientifically known and the unknown, between knowledge and faith, between processes dependent upon reasonable calculation and processes dependent upon impulse; and, above all, it gives the only possible justification for the numerous bold leaps which we shall never cease to take, in spite of any number of scientific dogmatizers.

Or we may explain the aim of a social philosophy in this way. Social science is compelled, in so far as it is to be scientific, to isolate the group or groups of phenomena, relationships, institutions, activities, and forces, which it intends to investigate. But these are, of course, separable only in thought, not in reality. The social relationships are all intertwined with one another; the aspects of the social individual are merely aspects; the activities are all interconnected; the institutions are all interdependent; the forces are all working together. The same man enters into, lives in, is occupied with and influenced by them all. The business man is also a citizen, a neighbour, a family

man, and so on. His activities in each set of relations may, indeed, be treated separately with considerable advantage, for the sake of simplicity and clearness—just as we may treat any *thing* separately, in its numerical, its chemical, its mechanical relations, in order to increase our scientific knowledge of it. But we have always to remind ourselves that the special aspect or set of relations we are considering is only one bit of a complex whole. Unfortunately, this is exactly what we are all prone to forget when we specialize in social science. Nine-tenths of the mistakes of the economist are due to the fact that he has been tempted to consider the “economic man” out of relation to the moral man, the family man, the citizen; or to consider the market and the system of business apart from the school, the State, and the system of morals. Nor is it only the student of a special social science who is exposed to this danger. All of us, in our practice, tend to make the same mistake. The practice of charity and relief affords a good example. The Poor Law guardian or the benevolent person who only regards applicants from the two points of view—that of the relations of dependence or independence, and that of the economic functions—may go quite as far astray as the clergyman who considers them only in the two relations of church-membership and neighbourhood. A really enlightened charity is bound to do its best to see the poor and needy in *all* their relations—the vital, organic, and psychical, as well as the economic, legal, and moral—a difficult task, no doubt, but to be attempted, if the treatment is to be part of a really sure social remedy.

It follows, further, from this complexity and interdependence of social facts that the separate social sciences which belong to each group are not really separate but closely connected. We may therefore make short work of the time-honoured question : Can you treat economic questions apart from moral considerations ? Of course you can, just as you can treat hydrostatics or hydrodynamics apart from the chemistry of water. In each case you work out your laws or truths—really important laws and truths—in abstraction or isolation from other considerations. But the moment you try to apply them, or deductions from them, to the complex social man and society without reference to the laws and truths of all other social sciences, you attempt to do what is quite as dangerous as furnishing the water-supply of a city in accordance with the physical or mechanical laws of the action of water, without taking into account the chemistry or physiology of the water. In the former case you run a risk of poisoning the life of your society, just as in the latter you run a risk of poisoning the bodies of your citizens. Clearly you need in each case to co-ordinate and consider together *all* the important and pertinent laws or truths. And in the case of water you can do this, for the important and pertinent laws are not unlimited. But unfortunately you cannot do it in dealing with society, for in social life everything is important and pertinent ; there are innumerable forces whose laws ought to be taken into account, innumerable facts whose order ought to be known,—and we cannot be omniscient. We may make ourselves masters of every social science

yet invented—and still be quite unable to do more than guess at the cure for a simple evil such as hunger among the children. We may write Sociology with the biggest capital S we can find, and call it all manner of flattering names—a General, Co-ordinating, Synthetizing Science, or any other soothing title ; but it certainly will not co-ordinate more than a very tiny fraction of all we need to know, if we are to proceed scientifically. What then ? Can a social philosophy perform the impossible for us, though science must fail ? By no means ; but what it *can* do is just this : It can take the socius or citizen, and explain what is involved in his membership of the whole social group or any part of it, in his relations to other members, in his connexion with each of the institutions which help to give meaning to his actions ; will also take each known process of change and each known or expected effect, and explain what is involved in the fact of its being a part of a far vaster process, an effect conditioned by an infinite sum of effects ; will take finally each end or aim, and show how its worth must be judged by its relation to the whole system of things worth having, which forms the moving ideal of human society.

A social philosophy cannot tell us what to do, but it can tell us very clearly where social duty lies, and how attached to social facts ; it can never tell us how to be happy or well-off—cannot, indeed, define the content of the end to which we give the name of happiness or well-being ; but it can render explicit the general conditions upon which any valid ideal must rest. It cannot say to us, in reference to any known evil, “ This is how the

misery can be cured ;" but it will say positively upon what group of motives, impulses, and beliefs the cure depends. And it is in this way that it can reveal some of the significance of the structure and the process which we call society and its life.

CHAPTER II

SOCIETY CONSIDERED AS SUBJECT TO THE FORCES AND LAWS OF THE PHYSICAL WORLD

WE have now to undertake the first part of our task: the consideration, under the sociologist's guidance, of the various ways in which our society with its social life is affected by the forces of external physical nature, and of the extent to which, as a part of the physical universe, it is conditioned by the laws of that universe.

But two preliminary explanations are still needed. In the first place, we must note that the sociologist's attitude to the question differs from that of the social philosopher. It is natural that most sociologists should be chiefly interested in society as the all-important thing to be explained; and they therefore approach their task with the implication that, when the inquiry is completed, they will have reached an adequate explanation of the nature and activities of the social units—human beings. But this is not the philosopher's attitude. He is not specially interested in the nature of society and the social group as such, but rather in the nature and life and powers of the units composing the group. We will

discuss later the full relation of the individual to society ; at present we may be content to say that we want to understand society as something which conditions our life, as a very definite environment in which our life is set—very much as we might want to understand our physical bodies as conditions of our activities, and as a definite ever-present environment of our individual life. In this latter case, we should try to discover how the body is affected and made what it is by the forces of nature which constantly impinge upon it (as well, of course, as by the processes of growth) ; we should be interested to find out how the external environment—such as climate, geographical conditions, food supply, and so on—reacts directly upon our physical form—upon stature, strength, and health, for instance—or indirectly, by influencing the activities in which we engage. Just in the same way we are interested to discover how the external physical conditions react upon our social environment—upon society regarded as our greater body, so to speak. And the reason of this view is this : We call society our constant environment—rightly, because, as social beings, we never escape from it and its influences. But, just as we refuse to allow that we are *merely* social beings, or that our social nature is the clue to the truest part of us or to the highest form of our activities, so we refuse to allow that the social explanation, however complete, "can explain all our life and activities. The nature of the social group is not co-extensive with our nature ; the former does not fully explain the latter.

And further, the social group or society—the larger body by which my activities are conditioned—is never a

single definite unit like my physical body. It *is* a thing among things, a group among other groups—just as is a forest, or a star-cluster, or an ant-hill ; but it is not an organism, in spite of having organic characteristics, nor is it the seat of a feeling or thinking mind, in spite of having a mental side—a side of increasing importance. Nor am I confined within it, nor compelled to live subject entirely to its conditions. The particular social conditions of my society become less and less the sole determinative influences in my life as that life opens out. A baby or young child lives altogether in its nursery-group of mother, nurse, and brothers and sisters. But, as it grows older, it emerges into wider and less coherent groups, until at last, perhaps, it lives much of its significant life beyond the society of which it is still a part, and even, perhaps, beyond any social conditions—though it is still subject to all the limitations of social existence. Some of my friends, undoubtedly, live part of their lives among the ancient Hindoos or Greeks or Jews, not as students, but as thinkers, idealizers, and even as practical men and women ; others, especially the vain ones, are almost as much among the French as among their fellow English, although they may never cross the Channel ; some of us, perhaps, at dark moments of our lives, live like the prodigal son among the swine at a pig-trough ; and a very few walk, like Enoch, with God, and pass some of their life in heaven. Clearly these people and their activities are not *merely* a part and product of *their* society. Nor, to go a step further, are they merely the product of any society or combination of social conditions

—a fact which is involved in our original assertion that they are all spiritual beings. But the sociologist who takes the social group or social phenomena as his starting-point is usually driven to explain our life and activities wholly by reference to it, and as products of its working. He would argue, for example, that every element entering into our life has a social origin (apart, of course, from the elements which are purely physical or organic); and that the social explanation will cover satisfactorily, not only the philosophies of Greece and India, and the art and taste of France, but also the particular pig-trough in which some sinners wallow, the particular God which some saints worship, the particular heaven which they imagine they find. This is the position which at the outset I have denied; and I emphasize the antagonism of view by taking the individual as my centre of interest, and considering him as subject to social conditions, as to a form of environment which is itself only to be explained by reference to *his* nature—instead of beginning with society and the social conditions, and then explaining the individual by reference to them. And the result of this different attitude is that it enables us to take the view—whose importance will appear subsequently—that social conditions come to matter less, as formative influences, as the individual and the race develop; and that the supra-social powers of the individual come to matter more and more as the formative factors to which the changes of social condition are due.

In the second place, the questions which we have to consider—in what way society and social life are

affected by various sets of forces—have a fuller content than appears at first sight. We may amplify them in this form: The social life in which we are all merged has all kinds of characteristics and elements; how are they determined? From what causes do they spring? *Why* have we the particular kind of family which we have? Why these laws? Why this city or village, with its arrangements and order (or disorder), its contrivances and government? Whence these customs and ways of doing things? Why these class distinctions and differences of power and opportunity? Why these poor and needy? Whence these (occasional) feelings of sympathy, and this much commoner apathy? Whence also these achievements? This knowledge, art, literature? These railways, factories, buildings? These policies and political parties? Whence all these forms of religious belief, worship, superstition, or unbelief? These conceptions of property, duty, crime? Whence, in a word, *all* this social setting into which we are born here in England? It is very different from that of the ancient Aztecs, or the more modern Greeks and Romans, or the present-day South Sea Islanders, or Russians, or Americans. Very different too from that of our own society of a hundred or fifty years ago. How explain the changes?

Let it be remembered, also, that the questions include innumerable small matters, as well as big. Why does a man take off his hat to a woman, and not vice versa? Or why do men wear detachable hats, and women not? Why is the dog the most popular domestic animal? And why are the most useless, or

the most delicate, or the ugliest dogs the favourite pets to-day? Our discovered causes of social development must at least point the way to an answer to such questions as these ; for all these things form part of the social state in which we live, and none of them is without its significance. And it is this entire complex of them all which we denote by the phrase "society and social conditions," not the particular bits which the ordinary citizen (perhaps rightly) dwells upon most, such as the slum and its poverty, the laws and their effect, the Government and its influence.

Moreover, the social philosopher is supremely interested in all the answers which sociology can give him ; for the question : "What lies behind all this stuff which forms my social conditioning?" must be answered as fully as possible before I can go on to ask, "What does it all mean for *me*? How can I use it best? How can I make it better?" Right use and real improvement depend upon something more than the causes which science can lay bare ; but neither the use nor the improvement will be what they might be unless these causes are known. The analogy of our bodies is entirely to the point here. I will not admit that the development of my character is wholly a result of physical, vital, and social conditionings ; but I will admit that each of these has an important effect upon it. An east wind or a business worry affects my liver, it may be, and this reacts upon my whole nervous system, and so upon my power of self-control. That, however, is not the whole explanation of my surly temper ; but it is an important part. It is the part

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which the doctor discovers, and to which he confines himself; and I am interested in it, not because I care much about the internal processes of my body, but because I am glad to know how this or that hindrance or help to my moral and spiritual progress is produced by environmental causes. For, after all, however high in the scale any human being may be—let us say one whose spiritual life overshadows all else—he never ceases to be a centre towards which the forces of the inorganic world converge, a being in whom the forces of organic life are at work, and a feeling and thinking mind whose operations are subject to psychological and social laws. In other words, whatever else he may be, he still remains a thing among things, an animal among animals, a mind among minds, and a social unit among social units, subject to all the laws of things, animals minds, and society.

And the attitude of the social philosopher to the discoveries of the sociologist is very similar to my attitude to the discovered conditionings of my physical body. It is not that he expects to find in them the whole clue to this or that social evil or this or that social remedy; but he knows that they will reveal an ever-present part of the conditions. He knows, too, that the “natural” causes of this part of the conditions do not form a separate process which can be taken for granted—any more than the operation of the east wind or worry form a separate process or work on a separate plane, distinct from the working of my will and spirit. There is not one chain of causation which ends in a social state with

which we, as struggling spirits, are left face to face, and which we then proceed to attack with the special forces at our command ; on the contrary, the process of causation is a single one from beginning to end, and in that process our wills are working side by side with all the other forces to produce whatever social state now is or ever will be. Then with what *other* forces have our wills to combine or contend ? And what is the mode of their action ? These are the questions we ask the sociologist to answer for us.

Consequently, in order to get at the meaning of social life, we set ourselves first to examine social groups, their members, their relationships, their institutions, and their activities, as influenced by physical, vital, and psychical forces ; and we begin with the modifications impressed upon society by its subordination to the external forces and the laws of the physical world.

We may glance briefly at some of the sociological generalizations falling under this head, which are now rightly regarded as rather suggestive than trustworthy.

Society has been brought directly under the laws of matter and force by virtue of the fact that its development appears to follow always the order of cosmic evolution. Every society exhibits the universal process of progression from a small, loosely connected aggregate with very simple structure and great sameness of parts, to an increasingly large and compact aggregate with constantly increasing complexity of structure and heterogeneity among the component parts. Such a generalization is of little use to us ; but we may at least register the fact that we may expect, in accordance

with the laws of cosmic evolution, to find our society and its parts and its activities becoming ever more complicated and diverse, though not less interdependent, as time goes on.

Again, society has been brought under the cosmic law of energy, and the principle of the conservation, limitation, and transmutation of energy has been applied to explain many of the phenomena of social change. In early times the limited amount of energy available in any social group is seen to be directed now to one form of activity, now to another, but never to many forms at once. At one stage all energy seems to be absorbed in fighting, and very little internal progress takes place. Consolidation and strengthening of the social group go on, but very little development of differentiated structure. With peace comes greater internal activity, quicker growth of social institutions, together with criticism and discussion and yet further change of internal processes. In later civilizations, it is true, we find energy distributed in apparently innumerable channels ; but it still seems definitely limited. Concentration upon any one big thing necessarily stops or checks the internal growth and change. There is little internal progress during a great war. Also, special attention paid to any one set of activities tends to starve other activities. Rapid economic progress and wealth-making go side by side with diminished spiritual progress ; and marked development and use of the powers of thought and feeling in any form are accompanied by diminution of physical advance—marked either by less robust health or a declining birthrate or less output of energy. Such

fluctuations and transpositions of energy are universal, and are often vaguely illustrated from history. The extraordinary outburst of literary, artistic, and philosophic activity among the Athenians of the end of the fifth century synchronized with the decline of their fighting powers ; Rome's ability to conquer, organize, and govern, waned as soon as energy was diverted to intrigue and pleasure. The Jews have been many astonishing things, from examples of religious intensity to marvels of commercial enterprise and success ; but seldom more than one thing at a time. When merchandise and money are in the ascendant, the Talmud and the Bund are on the wane. So in our society. Our spiritual activities sink to a low ebb when industrial pursuits are made the centre of the nation's activity ; we are rightly called materialistic during the period of greatest commercial expansion. In America, also, you may find many small ideal experiments going on, without much success ; and much material success with correspondingly little idealism. And in Germany, as Fichte and others have sorrowfully admitted, the thoughtful, introspective, poetical, and philosophic activities of seventy years ago seem to be disappearing in face of the outer, pushing, progressive activities of to-day.

So, again, with more special phenomena within any society. The birthrate declines among the intellectuals ; why ? It is not merely a matter of preference : E. A. Ross is only partially right in saying that the Americans now prefer to "take out their success in upholstery rather than in babies." It is truer, perhaps, to say (as

some one has crudely put it), that a thinking woman cannot also act the part of a constant child-bearer. Among our poorer population, on the other hand, energy is so much absorbed in the primary struggles of work or the rearing of children, that little room is left for intellectual activity—a fact which is at the root of the present disheartening difficulties of working-class adult education.

These generalizations are mentioned for what they are worth—which is very little indeed. As in the case of the law of cosmic evolution, it is perhaps worth our while to register the fact that the laws of energy must be borne in mind when dealing with changes of social phenomena, although attempts to explain any of the phenomena by reference chiefly to this law are crude in the extreme. And further—though this belongs to a later stage of our discussion—the laws of energy probably require to be re-stated before they can be applied to human society ; for it is at least possible that for all spiritual beings there exist sources of energy to be drawn upon which are outside the calculation of the cosmic philosopher.

Another group of generalizations demands a moment's notice. It was at one time fashionable to refer to differences of geographical formation and of climate for an explanation of differences of national character. Historians and philosophers of history would fall back upon such causes in order to explain the difference between the versatile Athenians and the stolid Bœotians, the energetic Norsemen and the indolent South Sea Islanders, the conquering and colonizing British and the

peaceable Hindus. But such generalizations are rightly discredited nowadays, and have no place at all in sociology. Like many generalizations of history, they are valueless, for the simple reason that they mass together a vast number of complicated influences (without analysis) under the single head of "land" or "climate," and a still greater and much more complicated collection of social elements under the head of "national character," and then link the two together without analysing the connexions. Not in this way can any true causal relations between external influences and the elements of social life be established. Those influences do not act directly as one mass upon another ; but in subtle, indirect ways make their mark upon the tissue of society and the conduct of its members.

We turn, therefore, to very much more refined statements of the action of the external world upon society. Sociologists are now generally agreed that natural conditions, such as climate, geographical position, the flora and fauna of a district, do produce a constant modification of all social activities and institutions, by operating through the economic necessities of the social units. In its extremest form this theory was elaborated by Karl Marx. His position may be summarized thus: The lines of development of everything around us are determined by the conditions of the natural environment. This is clear, whether we consider the structure of the rocks, the growth of the trees, or the organs of all living things. Why should not the same causes explain the structure of human society and the organs of society, such as its industrial organs, its governmental organs,

and so on? It can easily be shown that this is really the case. If we look at an animal society—say, a colony of beavers—we find that everything about it, from the houses that compose its framework to the habits and teeth and limbs of the members, is the result of the natural environment reacting in particular ways upon the needs of the beavers. So, too, with human society: nature, working through man's needs, causes the plough and the mill, the farm and the farm-house, the steam factory and the railway; the slave system and the wage system, feudal government, and then democratic government with all its "free" institutions—all alike subordinated at every stage to nature's directions, which make themselves felt through the tools and machines and methods and organizations of industry necessitated by economic needs working in a particular environment.

But where Marx generalized wildly, a much more genuine sociologist set to work to establish a rather similar but saner position by careful observation and scientific inquiry. Frederick Le Play, a French engineer, spent some twenty-six years in the collection of elaborate details concerning the influences of place upon work, and of work upon the family and social organization of societies; and in consequence of his and his followers' researches it is possible to state with confidence the mode and extent of nature's influence upon our social life.

Examination of the characteristics of early or primitive groups shows that the kind of country they inhabit determines the kind of occupation to which they are compelled to devote themselves. On a bare

sea-coast they must needs fish to get a living ; in a forest country they must hunt in small groups ; on the prairie they must hunt also, but in larger groups ; on land like the steppes of Central Asia, or the Tundras of Northern Asia and Europe, they can only get a living by herding horses or reindeer ; in a fertile valley they can—and usually must—till the ground and grow corn. Now the important result of this is that the kind of occupation thus forced upon the people tends to determine not only the size of the group, but the constitution and organization of the society, the relations of the members to one another, the feelings and disposition of the people, their customs and ideas. No part of their life is unaffected ; and the different effects are traceable to this single set of causes—the external conditions imposed by nature. Nothing could be more marked than the difference between a primitive fishing folk or forest hunting group, and a pastoral folk. The small, unstable families of the former are contrasted with the large, well-organized, and stable patriarchal families of the latter ; callous indifference to the claims of parents and elders among the former are opposed to religious veneration for the head of the family on the part of the latter ; in place of thriftlessness and inability to look beyond the present hour, there appear careful provision for the future and capacity to think not only of this life but of the next as well. Institutions and ideas differ also. Among the former peoples, the instinct of private property leads little further than the recognition of the right of a man to own the weapons he has made or stolen and the game he has killed and the wife he has caught ; but

among the latter, ideas of both private and communal property are well developed, rules of inheritance are recognized, and the social order that depends upon property is established. And all these differences are due to the fact that the manner of living, or rather of getting a living, is so different ; and this in turn is due to the compulsion of natural surroundings.

The differences, again, between the moving pastoral peoples and the fixed village communities of agricultural folk, are no less marked, and might be traced throughout all the departments of their social life. And for the cause of these differences, again, we must go back, always and chiefly, if not entirely, to the natural conditions which have forced this or that kind of occupation upon the different groups.

When we pass to the more advanced groups which we usually call civilized societies, we find the same forces at work in the same ways, though the processes and results are, of course, more complex and difficult to trace. But there can be little doubt that this one influence of place upon work is a *vera causa* to which constant attention must be paid whenever we are trying to explain the elements of social life, even in the most advanced societies. The actual physical conditions of the territory occupied by any society or group is, and will probably always be, a clue to many of the activities in which the members are engaged ; these in turn react upon their relations to one another in countless ways, and so affect their social organization, their institutions, their prevailing ideas and ideals. This fact has been expressed in the formula that "place determines work,

and work determines social organization"; and upon the basis of this formula the sociologists who form the Le Play school have built up a very considerable body of sociological knowledge.

It is, however, necessary to enter a warning against a too exclusive attention to the one set of causes which we have been considering. Without belittling the labours and discoveries of any school of sociologists, the social philosopher is bound to insist on the need for constant modifications of statement necessitated by the complexity of the material and the different orders of forces at work. And perhaps the most reasonable view to take is this: land, climate, and food-supply, the resulting modes of work or industry, these factors dominate the whole social life of early societies, and are never without their effect upon every department of the life of more advanced or civilized societies. But their influence tends to be increasingly modified by the very different internal influences which we have provisionally called the vital forces and the mind forces; and most of all by the growing consciousness of purposes and aims on the part of society and its members. In the early stages nature compels and dictates; it drives and pushes and forces social life into this or that channel and form. At a later stage the compulsion becomes less, as man's power and conscious purpose grow; but the nature-influence remains as an influence always present, if not always fully realized. At a still later stage, the influence will perhaps become more easily modifiable still, until it may be quite secondary to other factors of our development; until at last the social

beings who at the first were made what they were by their physical conditions, may end by making their physical conditions for themselves in accordance with their own aims. We may conceivably be within reach of the time when we shall make our own climate, our scenery, our soil and our food-supply what we want them to be, instead of just accepting them from the hand of an all-dominating nature.

This diminution of the importance of the physical forces, as society lives its way into a fuller life, is an obvious but very significant fact. Society doubtless follows the order of development expounded by Herbert Spencer, but it follows other orders too. In the early stages, it is like a mere thing, such as a crystal; and the physical forces count for everything. Its structure and institutions and aims (if we can so call the ends towards which it is pushed) reflect the characteristics of a physical-force period. Toughness, cohesion, compactness, are the first needs; force-institutions are the earliest institutions; the war-chief or strong man is the first form of ruler; external *force* or necessity is the one explanation of everything. Later on, the organic nature asserts its power more, as it were; and the vital forces emerge into more obvious importance. The ends of society now become more clearly the ends of a *growing* thing—increase of size, differentiation of structure, adaptability. The institutions are no longer mere force-institutions, but growth-institutions. They are what they are because they have grown to that form, and because growth has required them to be so. Custom—the evidence of long-continued growth—is the basis

upon which they rest. The strong man leader gives place to the tribal chief—patriarch, or oldest father.

Still later, the psychical or mind-forces and the spiritual or soul-forces begin to show themselves as rivals to the growth-forces; the partly conscious influence of reason and soul appears. *Now* the ends of the society may indeed be called purposes or aims, though at first hardly presented to consciousness or explicitly recognized in any way. Still, the new motive power is there. A just and well-ordered community, pleasing to God and to man's reason, is the general aim; a new basis appears for all institutions, for law, government, family life, and the rest. And it may be described as consonance with this aim—a basis in which reason and religion combine. The institutions are now those of *purpose*, resting in some measure upon thought and agreement; first perhaps upon the dictated or assumed reason and thought of God, then upon the discovered and justified reason of man. First a priest ruler—a judge or priest or pope; then the God-appointed king; then the constitutional monarch; and finally the assemblage of minds ruling themselves. Custom gives place to the reason why; the basis and justification of every institution begin to be found in the fact—not that it is and has been and must be so, and has endured as long as can be remembered, or has grown into what it is—but in the fact that it commends itself to reason, is accepted by reasonable people, is agreed upon as best and wisest.

It is convenient to talk of stages; but it is incorrect and misleading, except in the sense of stages in which

this or that set of forces is predominant, without any sort of implication that all the other forces are not still at work. In the earliest known stage of human society, there is a glimmer of conscious purpose, and the growth impulses are of course operative. And in the latest stage we can ever hope to reach, the physical forces will be still at work—inevitably ; for so long as society is conditioned by the necessities of a physical universe, so long those forces will affect it. In other words, however much we grow in thought and knowledge and power and purpose—becoming more and more minds and spirits—we do not cease to be also bodies, nor do we cease to be things. The social units can never cease to be things and animals as well as minds and souls ; but they may hope to become more decidedly mind and soul than thing and animal.

In another way the predominant elements of the earlier stages may be said to survive in later societies ; in the form, I mean, of strata of population at different levels of development. Some groups of primitive savages are to be found in every society ; yet larger numbers representing the simple growth stage. The former are motivated or moved almost only by external force. To the question, Why do they do this or that ? the only intelligible answer seems to be, Because they have to. The latter, on the other hand, are moved by the impulses of their natural life and growth, and by the elements which embody the past elements of that growth. They, too, are pushed from behind—though the force is one within them or within their group. Why do they do this or that ? Or approve of this or that ?

Is it because they have thought it out, and found it in harmony with their rational system of life—the man-made guide which leads the philosopher on into the future? Or is it because of an ideal which they draw, as an inspiration, from they know not whence? Not in the least; it is because the inherited structure of their social life dictates it; because the custom or convention or rule, which has its origin and sanction in past responses to felt vital needs, prompts them to do or approve this, to avoid or disapprove that.

It follows that we shall expect to find, and do find, the physical forces (pressures and necessities of external nature) not only acting unevenly upon the strata of modern societies, but—in so far as society is one—acting in strange and complex ways. Their influence can still be traced; but not now directly or simply. No longer the direct effect of climate or food-supply or habitat compelling a particular mode of life and form of social organization; instead, we find these causes working through many steps of intermediate cause in which other forces are combined. Strange, half-thought-out devices of industry and social arrangement—such as capital, legal regulation of work and hours and wage, communal protection and provision—have come between us and the simple forces behind us, modifying their action in countless ways. And at most we can say that our mode of life is determined by these physical forces in unanalysed combination with totally different ones.

This chapter has, at any rate, a negative value. It explains the danger of what is known as the economic or physical interpretation of history and social life. We

are not yet in a position to condemn such interpretations on the ground that they are essentially materialistic, though they always are this, and so deserve the name of economic determinism. Nor can we yet prove that they are wrong because they make all our ideals and aspirations subordinate to physical pressures. But we can at once object to their one-sidedness, as applied to the explanation of the complex social life of a civilized community. The factors which *now* count for most in the formation and changes of our social state are the purposes and aims and impulses of a partly rational society. The direction in which these lead us, and the limits within which they work, may have been almost wholly determined in the distant past by physical conditions, and are partly so determined still. But their influence now is misrepresented if they are regarded as following rather than leading. Even their physical origin (if that is the true account) does not imply a physical determination in their more developed stages.

The economic interpretation has been pressed too hard—the usual result of the discovery of a real influence previously neglected. We accept it as far as it can take us. If we are trying to explain the Crusades, we will take into account the neglected causes of the pressure of population and the scarcity of food ; but we will not exalt these into the all-important motives. If we are trying to explain a modern phenomenon such as a millionaire or a missionary or a trust, we will include among our causes the pressure of industrial needs and circumstances ; but we will include

these side by side with elements of desire and aim and even individual ideals, as well as of faith and religious conception of life, or want of faith and non-religious conception. And we will regard these others as belonging, now at any rate, to distinct orders of forces.

But has the chapter any positive value too? Does it mean anything to the reformer? Does it really help us to explain the slum and its evils, and so to remedy them? A little, certainly. In any colliery village, or cotton town, or sea-port, or commercial centre, many characteristics of the people and their habits and their family life and their views are only explicable by reference to the environmental pressures working through their economic needs. This is true also of any complete society and its structure. Our House of Lords, our conception of property, our class distinctions, our city life, our policies, none of these can be understood apart from the significant facts that an agricultural economy has recently been superseded by a manufacturing economy—each the outcome of physical causes plus sundry accidents of conquest and discovery. Well and good; but let us come to closer quarters with the matter. Here is an East London riverside street. The physical interpretation explains part of its population and its life. An island, sea-faring people are bound to be traders; trade requires ports; ports must have docks; docks demand dockers; and the irregularities of wind and tide compel irregular dock work. Hence our street of casual dock-labourers, watermen, lightermen, stevedores, and so on.

Not so, the reformer may retort, with just vehemence.

All this sequence of compulsions involves no compulsion for us. The result of them all is not a street presenting a set of conditions which must be so, but a set of conditions upon which our wills and our reforming zeal have to work. We have hitherto left the conditions very much what the physical pressures have made them; neither the wills of the dwellers in the street, nor the wills of all other citizens have yet tackled the situation—as we should and could and must do. Compelling nature makes all sorts of conditions, I grant you; and they ramify through the whole of our life—if we let them. Some are perhaps unalterable: nature does set fixed limits to our activities. We cannot very well be a fisher folk or have an Admiralty if we live in Central Asia; we cannot have a really successful Alpine Club if we inhabit a perfectly flat country. This is common-sense. We must also have docks and dockers; but we need not have casual dockers nor half-starved dockers. And this is just where nature's dictation ends. Limits are set within which our activities and our life are confined. But limits are *not* set to the improvement of the *quality* of the life so confined. The only important lesson to be learned from all this discovery of physical causation is this: that if this street of casual labourers is to be changed, then the change will and must run back through all the chain of causes which have helped to produce it—the system of dock labour, the management of the docks and port, the methods of our commerce and trade. And the changes may come about in two ways. Either we, as a community, may go to work and alter the system and the methods, and so save the

dockers ; or—just possibly—the dockers may take their salvation in hand themselves, and, by altering their lives, compel alterations in the system of their employment and the methods of trade which produce it.

The reformer is right. There is no more to be said.

CHAPTER III

SOCIETY CONSIDERED AS SUBJECT TO THE FORCES AND LAWS OF ORGANIC LIFE

SOCIETY lives ; social phenomena are phenomena of life. What have the laws of life to teach us about them ?

In explaining the life of anything there are always three sets of facts or laws to be taken into account : the facts of organic structure ; the facts of organic growth ; and the facts of organic evolution.

The facts of organic structure may be expressed in this way : Everything that lives has some sort of structure which is what it is because of the function, or work, or purpose for which it exists. This is best expressed by likening it to a machine or tool (an "organon") which is what it is by reason of the work it has to do. And all the parts of a machine—its structure, in other words—have a meaning, or are to be explained only by reference to this work or function. The word "organic" therefore implies, at any rate, this : the possession of structure or definite arrangement of parts, dependent upon function, and deriving its meaning from its purpose or function. And an organism is

a living structure whose meaning or significance depends upon its functions. The structure is composed of parts, called separate organs, each with a function also ; and the parts are composed of cells, each of which, again, has a function to perform. These cells are the ultimate component elements of the organism—so far, at least, as we need analyse it here.

This possession of structure, consisting of organs composed of groups of cells, all related to the vital purposes, is the first fact of importance to be noted. It may be added that increased complexity of structure implies advance in organic life, for the simple reason that increased differentiation of organs and parts implies more numerous functions and purposes, and therefore more manifold activities on the part of the organism, as well as greater adaptation to different kinds of work.

It is clear that the facts of society correspond to a great extent to the facts of an organism. Its structure, and the relation of that structure to function, are both obvious. Every society possesses organs, which are what they are because of the work they have to do—a directing or governing part, for instance ; a producing or food-obtaining part ; a distributing or circulating part ; a protecting part, and so on. It is clear, too, that the whole structure and its parts are made up of cells, though it is less clear how exactly we should define those cells. From the point of view of the organs and their functions, we must regard the individual citizens as the cells ; but in relation to the general life and growth of society as a whole we would more

properly call the family the cell. But the family is not the unit which is of importance in making up the different structures of society. For these, individual men (and some women) are the important units or component cells ; and the family may be regarded as a kind of enveloping cell-substance which exists in order to preserve and reproduce the functioning cells which are required to form the organs of the society.

Again, like every organism, the "social organism" as a whole may be said to have a general vital function to which its entire structure is related. The general function or purpose of every organism is the satisfactory preservation of the life of the organism under the conditions which nature happens to have imposed. So with society. Whatever else we may have to say about the ends for which society exists, this, at least, is true, that its most obvious and necessary function is to keep itself alive, in a satisfactory way, in the circumstances in which it happens to find itself.

And, lastly, the dependence of structure upon function, and the interdependence of all the parts and functions upon one another, are organic characteristics which may certainly be predicated of society. All the organs are what they are and perform the functions which they perform and continue to be so and do so because of their connexion with the whole organism and its vital function and with one another ; and the same may be said of the cells, in part, at least. And this interdependence is perhaps the most significant fact which the "organic analogy" emphasizes for us. Social life from beginning to end presents, at least, this

characteristic of an organism, and we rightly use the terms which imply organic nature—such as structure, organs, tissue. For every bit of it is incessantly reacting upon every other bit; nothing can be dealt with separately; no part can exist without modifying the condition of every other part. This is so obvious and so much a truism that we need continually to be reminded that it is also true. If the slum is neglected it cannot possibly be well with Mayfair or Suburbia. If Mayfair is extravagant or luxurious then the poor must suffer. If religion is neglected, not only morality but business enterprise and physical fitness will be affected somehow. If neighbours are neglected the relations of employer to employee, of friend to friend, of brother to sister, will be altered for the worse. The effects may be slow and obscure and unexpected, but the effects are as certain and inevitable as are the similar results which flow from the organic connexions within our physical bodies. Society is not one, as Plato would have made it, in such a way that every injury to any insignificant part of it is felt at once through all the parts. But society is one, if not in feeling, at any rate in fact; and probably humanity also, so far as its different groups and members are socially related at all. For every social relation is an “organic” relation in this sense, that it involves the necessary organic reactions indicated by the word “interdependence.” All our treatment of the natives of India or of Africa, all the actions we perform or countenance, all the omissions for which we are responsible, throw their effects back through the whole tissue of our social life, insensibly perhaps, but surely.

So far we find that the analogy holds good, and suggests numerous considerations which it is well that the social philosopher should take into account. But the analogy (even when we confine our view to social structure and function) cannot be stretched far; society resembles an organism in many characteristics, but the points of difference are more numerous and more important than the points of resemblance. One or two obvious differences may be noted here; the most important of all will be dealt with later. In the first place, the cells out of which the organs of society are built up are never wholly fixed or specialized as a component part of a single organ. Every normal individual is a component part of many organs. A bishop is not merely a Church functionary, a soldier does not exist solely to fight, and most workmen do many other things besides their day's work. And, as we shall notice later, these other things are of more importance in giving significance to the cell than its ostensible social function.

Similarly, all the organs or structural parts of society are plastic and even interchangeable in ways unknown among organisms. A sect or a Church or a group of traders may become an army of fighters; while an army may be dissolved at a moment's notice, and convert itself into a body of peaceable farmers or tradesmen. In no organism, even of the lowest type, do we find any phenomenon really resembling the turning of swords into pruning hooks.

Again, society has no organs whatever for certain important functions, such as feeling and thinking.

Does that merely mean that it is so low in the scale of organic life that it neither feels nor thinks, and so requires neither a sensorium nor a brain? As will appear later, the difficulty cannot be resolved so easily; social feeling is a reality, though no organ exists for it.

We pass on to the second set of facts which must be considered: the facts of organic growth and change. These may be stated, for our purpose, in this way: First, that change is always going on in every part of the organism; secondly, that the changes are all determined from within—by the life-characteristics of the organism and its special needs, as well as by the environment in which it lives; and thirdly, that all the changes which belong to organic growth and change follow invariably a definite cycle of development, maturity, decay and death.

Of these facts, the first undoubtedly finds illustration in the life of every society. It is of the utmost importance to realize that no single institution, no relationship, no social habit or custom or attitude or view, no belief or creed or conception, is ever stationary, ever the same two days running. The Church of to-day is never the Church of yesterday; our constitution and laws are undergoing alteration even when Parliament is not sitting; the institution of private property is changing little by little every day—and will so change, in spite of all the property defence leagues in the world; the full definition of the family which fits our family now will not fit it next year. It does not follow that all or

any of these changes are "progressive" in the sense of being movements to some better state. It may be so; or the change may be only an advance in old-fogeyism, or a movement from greater to less usefulness, or from comparative stability to great instability.

But the second fact is not applicable to society. The determination of the incessant change of an organism from within, and not merely from without, is one of the very obvious characteristics of any living thing. That is to say, every organism begins as a group of fixed potentialities, which determine absolutely the lines of its developmental changes. An acorn *must* grow into an oak tree, and a baby into a human adult—if they grow at all; and from birth to death all the changes which belong to the organic life of each are determined in their kind by the fundamental oak-nature or human nature. Of society we cannot say this. We may, indeed, insist that all its changes are determined from within, by movements of feeling, impulse, and felt need; but there is no fixed group of nature-potentialities to which all the changes are relative, as is the case with every organism.

And thirdly, society has no predetermined cycle of change by which it is compelled to pass through the fixed stages of growth, maturity, old age, decay and death. It is one of the shallowest of social generalizations to predicate old age or decrepitude of any society. Historians may speak figuratively of the decay and death of *an empire*—of the decline and fall of Rome or Babylon, of the possible decline of the British Empire. But the sociologist is forced to deny that societies have

any term of life or vigour, or need ever die or decay. The life must be constantly renewed—and is so renewed indefinitely. But any society may live (with probable fluctuations of power and achievement) for any number of centuries; and any institution—such as a Church—may live on indefinitely too—changing incessantly in subtle ways, but without any break in the thread of its life.

When we turn to the third set of facts—the facts of organic evolution—we find that the analogy of society to an organism breaks down almost entirely. But, as we are now dealing with a thoroughly dangerous word, a preliminary explanation is necessary. Evolution may be taken in its literal meaning of “unrolling” or “unfolding”; and in this sense it may be applied to any living thing whatever, from a bud or a flower to society and its life. But organic evolution is now generally understood to imply a definite process by which types and species of living organisms and their organs are evolved; and unfortunately it is in this sense that the word is often applied to society and social institutions. Now the facts of organic evolution of this kind are as follows: First, that the organisms multiply their kind and die and are succeeded by descendants—of the same type, but slightly differing from the parents; secondly, that between organisms and types of organisms there is a constant struggle to survive, or competition for the means of subsistence; thirdly, that the individuals and types best fitted for the existing environment tend to survive, and so the variation of type best fitted for survival does actually tend to endure. And these facts

form the basis of what are known as the laws of heredity, variation of type, natural selection, and survival of the fittest.

Now none of these facts or laws can be applied to society and its institutions except in a very figurative and peculiar way. The succession of individuals, one generation constantly taking the place of its predecessor, is a necessary condition of heredity and variation. But societies do not die and leave offspring to succeed them ; institutions—such as Churches, armies, or legal systems—do not produce other institutions to continue their kind. Variation, it is true, is always taking place ; but it is not this sort of variation. There is no break in the life-thread ; the incessant change which we have asserted of everything social is accompanied by indefinite continuity of the life of the society or the institution. It is true, also, that we apply the conception of heredity to social life, speaking of the heritage of each age, or of our social inheritance. But the use of the word is wholly figurative ; the Church of to-day inherits what the Church of yesterday has handed down to it, very much in the sense in which a man of fifty inherits what his youth has bequeathed to him.

The conceptions of struggle, selection, and survival are similarly inapplicable. There *is* struggle between societies and between institutions and types of organs within them ; there is also selection and survival of types. But again, it is not at all the struggle, selection, or survival which organic evolution requires. We speak, for example, of the competition and struggle between our industrial system and that of Germany ; but the

process and result are both peculiar, consisting in a constant series of reactions of one system upon the other, leading—not to the disappearance of one and the survival of the other—but to endless modifications of both by means of imitation of method and purposed changes of organization and device.

The facts which we have been considering, of organic structure, growth and change, and evolution, do, of course, apply to the individual units—the human beings—of whom society is built up. For we, the units, are living organisms, and therefore subject to all the laws of organic life. But it is important to note here that, since we are also human, social, spiritual beings, the laws of organic life work upon us subject to all the controls imposed by the conditions of these other sides of our nature; and the effect of their working—which is, of course, never absent—is merged in a very complicated sum of effects which, as a whole, is very different from the effects found among all other organisms. Thus, the forces of heredity and the natural agents of selection (such as disease and war) are always at work among us exactly as among all existing living things. But we may combine the forces of heredity with the forces of our aims and purposes in such a way as to produce types which nature would never have produced, or to give a very long lease of life to other types which nature would have killed off long ago. And in the same way we may, and certainly do, complicate the effects of natural selection and survival by the interaction of what we may call, according to our prejudice, the vice of humanitarian sentimentality or the virtue of humane

sympathy; and the total result is something very different from what would have appeared if the forces of nature and organic life had been left to work alone. But however far this process of our meddling may go, it does not in the least alter the fact that, throughout our individual lives, and throughout the life of the race or the species, the laws of the organism apply every whit as much as to any other section of the organic universe. The biologist or the biological sociologist is only wrong when he finds fault with our meddling, and asks us either to allow the natural forces to produce their natural effects without the distortions due to our designs, or else to combine with them only the forces (the purposes and aims) which *he* thinks good. For then he passes beyond his province; the social aims are not more his business than the business of any other citizen. As well might he exhort an Indian fakir, who insists upon holding his arms straight out for an indefinite time, to allow the forces of gravitation to have their natural effect in drawing them down to his side again—as would happen with any ordinary mortal. If the fakir chooses to combine with gravity the force of his own will and purpose, and so produce a very unusual result, what is that to do with the man of science? And if the latter urges that the result will be deleterious and will probably cause atrophy of the muscles (and he very properly might urge this), even so his argument is not in the least conclusive. The fakir has another aim than physical fitness; if atrophy is the price he has to pay for the attainment of this aim, well and good. The man of science may call him an

outrageous fool ; but his arguments are not pertinent. And in something of the same way (though the analogy is an extreme one) the biologist may call society foolish or mad for aiming at results very different from those which nature tends to bring about unaided or unhindered. He may rightly warn society of this or that atrophy or other consequence, and the social units must take heed to the warning. But the argument is not conclusive ; if we still insist upon giving play to our sympathy or sentiment, in accordance with some aim of our own, that is an end of the matter. We may be extraordinarily foolish, like the fakir, in the eyes of the man of science. But only the far-off result can prove that.

One or two points suggested in the foregoing discussion call for fuller consideration. We noticed that the units or cells of society could not be regarded as really analogous to the cells of an organism, by reason of the fact that they are not specialized and fixed in relation to a particular organ or the performance of a particular set of functions ; and that the organs are also peculiar in consequence of their plasticity or power of changing their work or function. The cells do all manner of things in the course of a single day, and in connexion with other organs ; their individual activities are far more numerous than those involved in their one defined function ; no one is entirely a component part of a single organ, absorbed in its work, as are the specialized cells of an organism, such as the nerve cells, bone cells, hair cells, and so on. Each social unit may have one chief function—from which his usual description is

derived—as workman, policeman, postman, or member of Parliament. But this by no means exhausts his meaning ; and—a much more serious matter—is often far from indicating the most important part of his social significance. Similarly every organ performs many functions, or at least has many activities ; though, again, each has some chief function from which it derives its name, as a factory, or an army, or a prison system. But in this case, also, the real social significance of the organ goes beyond this—beyond, indeed, any possible definition of its functions and activities.

Now the functions and activities of an organ or cell of our physical bodies are doubtless often more diverse than we know, and our definitions of them are far from complete. This is probably true of all living matter. We can define accurately and completely the function of a watch or a hammer—as such. But we have probably not got to the bottom of the activities of the heart or the phagocyte cells or any other part of our organic bodies. We know and define each by reference to *some* functions only ; but then we know in these cases that the activities which we have discovered and included in our definition are the important and significant ones in relation to the structure and the growth and welfare of the organism, as it interests us. The heart *is* the organ which pumps the blood, and the phagocyte cells *are* the blood's scavengers ; and that is what we chiefly want to know about them. It is possible that every cell has a life of its own with far more complex and interesting activities ; it may conceivably have its loves and hates, its feelings and prejudices, very much as every human

social unit has. But these do not appear to matter in relation to our bodies ; they produce no serious changes in our health or physical condition. A disappointment in love or a change of creed on the part of any or every phagocyte cell in my body does not make me feverish or alter my organic structure and functioning. So long as they do their scavenging work, I need not care what they feel or think. But in the case of the organs and cells of the human society, it is just these undefined, obscure, internal activities which are important and significant in relation to *all* social changes—in relation to all that we call progress. We classify individuals and define institutions in accordance with some observed functions which they undoubtedly perform ; but the elements which really matter the most are found to elude our categories.

One or two examples will perhaps make this clear. If we take any normal citizen, we may define his social activities as fully as we can, designating each group by the name we give, calling him a workman, a father, a neighbour, a local councillor, and so on. The due performance of function in each case is of great social importance, undoubtedly ; but it often happens that the undefinable activities of the man are much more important, as affecting the *quality* of social life and progress. Does he drink much ? Does he spend his leisure in gambling or in street preaching ? What does he think and feel about all kinds of things ? What ideals does he dwell upon ? How much does he cultivate his spiritual nature ? These are the kinds of questions we want to answer if we are to estimate his

influence on society and its changes. And the answer cannot be summarized in any definitions of functions, however elaborate. Mr. Charles Booth's detailed account of the life and labour of Londoners is very valuable to the social philosopher; it even includes an estimate of the religious "organs" at work, and their effects. But even though such an account were carried into seventy times seventeen volumes, we should still be all at sea about the real potentialities of improvement latent in the population of London. Close contact and intimate knowledge will reveal a few—inhering in a few individuals; here is a porter who is fired by strange artistic ideals; here a coal-whipper, whose life—and therefore much of his influence—is that of a religious mystic; here a boot-maker who lives, not for his boot-making, but for the spread of red-hot socialism; here a dock-labourer, who, like the Jonathan Pinchbeck described by Mr. Thomas Holmes, would have made the finest naturalist-collector of the century if only he had had the opportunity. These are the things which we need to know about the units of our society if we are to answer the question: Of what is that society capable? What changes is it prepared for? What forces lie hidden within it?

With institutions the difficulty is very similar. The army is one of the most definite and easily defined organs of the State. But when every fact about its organization, its fitness for the performance of its functions, and the nature of those functions, is known, we have still to ask: What of all the *other* activities connected with it? What of the by-products of its

functioning? What does the soldier learn to think and feel by his term of service? What kind of citizen-ideal does the army generate, both among its members and in the community at large? And once more, these are the matters on which we need enlightenment if we are to estimate the significance of the army as a factor of social progress.

Now if the organic analogy held good, if the porters and coal-whippers and Jonathan Pinchbecks were the cells of such an organic body, then all the other activities of their lives which we have indicated would be important to *them* as individuals, but would not be important as affecting social changes or conditions; and if the organs of society were really organs, then, too, the obscure activities connected with them would be negligible, so long as their organic function was performed properly. But the reverse is the case. The real significance of social life—the true causes of its being what it is and becoming what it will be, the essential elements which give it *value*—all these things depend primarily upon those activities of units and organs which lie outside their ostensible functions, are not included in any definition of functions, and are for the most part never definable because never fully known.

Another point connected with the unknown potentialities of social development calls for careful explanation. We noted that society differed from an organism in the mode of determination of growth and change. In every natural organism the growth or development is pre-determined along all important lines. As the

potentialities of the seed or the embryo, so the growth—subject only to a more or less, a better or worse, in the manifestation of its necessary qualities, due always to the influences of environment. Beginnings of new qualities may indeed appear—slight variations in the type—whose origin is at present obscure, though certainly conditioned by some elements in the past parentage of the organism or some new elements in the environment. And these beginnings of variation may in succeeding generations become the basis of a new type.

In any social group or human being, the same law of growth holds good as to *part* of its manifestation of life and characteristics. The germs of its future state are to be found in the present and the past ; and that future state is the natural sequence or development of the potentialities now existing. In a general sense this is, of course, true of every conceivable change : nothing whatever can happen to-morrow of which the causes are not in existence somewhere to-day. But organic growth and change mean something more definite than this. They mean that the determining causes of change are to be found (if the analysis is made finely enough) in the existing structure of the organism : and this is true of part only of social changes—such as changes of structure—but not of the changes which are of most interest to us. The existing monogamous family has a definite structure and characteristics which undoubtedly determine to a considerable extent what our family will be like a generation hence ; and so with all social institutions. There will be numerous slight modifications, such as alterations of the laws of divorce, or of the rights and duties of

parents and children ; and accretions of these modifications will in time perhaps produce a new type of family which cannot be classed as the same species as our present monogamous family. This kind of change very closely resembles organic development ; and it is important, and has very far-reaching consequences. But this is not the kind of change that interests and affects us most ; and this is not the mode of causation by which the most significant changes are brought about. While the slow organic change is going on, there may come, at any moment, quickly or slowly, a change of a different order—a superimposing, as it were, of a new *quality* of the life contained within the structure of the monogamous family, giving a new meaning to the whole nature and structure and process of the family. This kind of change we may, if we like, call “developed,” and the potentiality is doubtless present beforehand ; only it exists, not in the natural body of the group, but in the whole stream of life or energy in which the life of the group is merged, and from which (and not from any germs of change within itself) it draws its motive impulse.

And as with groups, so with individuals. Many changes in their lives are organic, in the true sense that they result from the ordinary processes of development and decay. But the kind of change which we describe as, let us say, the “conversion” of an individual has no analogue in the organic world,* any more than has a

* I am aware that this statement might be flatly contradicted by those scientists who hold that even the most startling conversions (such, for example, as those described by Mr. Harold Begbie

group or organ with a changed ideal or spirit animating it ; and it is this kind of change which is by far the most interesting and significant to us, and not the organically determined changes. Moreover, changes of this sort cannot, without confusion, be called natural, except in the sense that they result from causes which might be discovered and described if only we could see deep enough ; but they are *not* natural in the stricter sense, by which we imply that they reside, as potentialities, either in the nature and structure of the organism, or in the enveloping conditions of external nature, or both. They must be sought in the subtler conditions of thought, purpose, will, and aspiration, which form the super-organic nature of society and its members.

So far we have dealt chiefly with generalities about the organic nature of society. This treatment is never satisfactory. The practical reformer and the ordinary citizen, quite properly, want to know what all the biological and sociological jargon means in relation to the hard facts of social life and the glaring needs of improvement. Does it mean anything useful? Has it any concrete application to our problems of poverty and

in his "Broken Earthenware") are only extreme instances of revulsions of feeling and desire, of impulse and habit, which are met with in many forms of organic life. This contradiction is based on a difference of first principles. I need only point out that I am at present assuming the existence of causal factors in human life which are not met with (as far as we know) in other forms of organic life, and this fundamental assumption rests for its justification on the fact (to be made clear later) that without it we reach no satisfactory interpretation of the whole process of social and individual development.

suffering, our proposals for reform? Let us therefore go back once more to the slum, and consider the organic analogy in its bearing upon it and its needs—which is tantamount to saying that we will consider it in relation to very necessary changes.

We have seen that social life, or any bit of it, has certain definite organic characteristics, far the most important being that of “interdependence.” This characteristic holds good not only of the structure of society, but also of its development, or growth, and change. In this sense, at least, these are organic—that they are always intimately connected with the nature and life of the social body as a whole. We admit that nothing human grows quite naturally, because man thinks about its growth, is discontented with it, and insists upon trying to improve it by meddling with it. But he never escapes from some of the conditions of growth, any more than he escapes from some of the conditions of physical pressure; and so his meddling is fettered to some extent by the laws of life and growth. Exactly how far these limitations extend is the most difficult of all things to determine. If we could ever learn enough to say with certainty:—So much must be left to growth, and so much may be done by our devising,—we should have settled once and for all the unanswerable question: “How far shall we be conservative and how far progressive?” This, of course, we can never hope to do; and yet we can, without the least hesitation, assert that *some* part of the field must be left to growth, and may indicate roughly how the boundaries of that part may be recognized.

Let us take first our meddling in relation to society as a whole, and the organic groups and institutions within it, deferring till later the discussion of the improvement of individuals. We have now a double set of facts to bear in mind: the undoubted facts of growth in the structure and tissue of society, and the equally undoubted facts of meddlesome ingenuity and purpose in ourselves. If we forget the former, the improvements prompted by the latter are likely to be disappointing (there is no fear of our forgetting the latter); and yet, just because we are so ingenious and so purposeful, we are always forgetting the conditions of our material.

Now the facts to be remembered are these:—

1. That all organic change must be related somehow to the inner life and capacities of the organism.

2. That there is no standard of mechanical simplicity or logical consistency which we can apply to alterations of a living thing as we can to alterations of a mechanism.

3. That all organic change is relatively slow.

4. (Underlying all the rest and forming the basis on which they stand.) That organic change, because it is organic, involves corresponding changes all through the organism.

Now when we deal with any natural organism we are compelled to recognize these conditions, and to restrain our ingenuity and purposes accordingly. No sane person tries to change an oak tree into a poplar, or to make a dog eat like a horse. We see, too, that *our* ideas of what is simplest, best, fittest, easiest, and most logical do not apply at all; for nature has only one

standard everywhere for all these things—namely, ability to exist and survive. What *is* is good ; what is able to go on being, is best ; and that is nature's final word in the matter. Consequently we refrain from saying that it is absurd to let an oak tree spread its branches in the way which imposes just the greatest possible strain on them ; or to let the bee-hive waste its substance on five thousand drones just in order to keep one alive ; or to let the codfish lay three million eggs for the sake of having two or three surviving children. Of course *we* could improve upon all this kind of thing. We know so much about simplicity, least resistance, mechanical improvements, labour-saving devices, and the like. But we know very well that any direct attempts on these lines to "improve" the oak tree, or reform the bee-hive, or lighten the cod's monstrous parental labours, would result in all sorts of unexpected failure, and probably in the destruction of the organism so "improved." We do undoubtedly attempt daring experiments, and "improve" upon nature—as gardeners, for example, or as breeders of animals ; but we, at least, "follow nature" in such cases by working gradually and upon the basis of the organic nature, allowing each organism to adapt itself to each step of the change. And all this we remember to do, because we know that all the changes are really organic.

I have already protested enough against the practice of regarding society as organic in too literal a sense. If we were really an organism, then all our political and social measures would be horribly dangerous. Even the

mildest suggestion of change allowed by the House of Lords in its most conservative mood would deserve to be stigmatized as revolutionary radicalism. And it is noteworthy that just in proportion as any people do over-emphasize the "growth" side of our life, so they also tend to be over-cautious and opposed to reform. The people who are always defending institutions because they are what they have come to be, and have worked fairly well for a long time, the people whose ideas and standards are "customary" or conventional, these are the people who are unconsciously exaggerating the "organic nature" and organic growth of social life.

But the tendency to forget it altogether is equally marked and equally dangerous. Some intelligent observer rushes home from Germany to tell us of the excellent system of relief or insurance which he has found there; and urges us to adopt it without delay—just as we would adopt a new piece of machinery. Now the particular system works well in Germany because it fits in with the German life and thought. But will it fit in with ours? Our institutions for the relief of need are very imperfect; but they have at least three centuries of growth behind them, and are organically connected with our temper and ways of doing things. This is no argument against change; it *is* an argument against adopting a particular change just because it has been found a success in a different society. Many of us have been puzzled for years to understand why several of the States in America have not long ago followed our example in the matter of protection of children by

means of Factory Acts. We forget that their whole attitude to industrial control and oversight has been different from ours, and this difference is an organic characteristic to which all their labour laws must conform. In all such matters the question of the social aptitude of the society concerned has to be taken into account. Imitation of other societies' discoveries is good—but always subject to the limits of organic adaptability involved in the whole structure and way of life of the imitating nation or group

Again, most of us are impressed at times by the grotesque absurdities inherent in our constitution. Our House of Lords is a queer feudal survival; our system of Church government is an even worse anachronism; our education system is a bundle of incongruities; our industrial system contradicts much of our moral code, just as our military system conflicts with much of our religion. Why not at once correct these anomalies? Our nearest neighbour among the nations sets us an excellent example of greater consistency and the application of more rigorous logic in the arrangement of the State. Very true; but then it is even truer—and much more important—that simplicity and logical consistency are not guiding principles for organic life—especially not for the life of Englishmen. It is our character to be illogical and inconsistent; we are miserable if we are not. And the various anachronisms and survivals which make up our peculiar constitution and methods of administration are at least adapted to this character, and in part the outcome of it. It is possibly true that the greater the

strength and energy, the less the liking for simplicity or consistency: it is not merely an unfortunate accident that the oak and the cedar spread their branches horizontally.

Incidentally we may note here the fallacy of the argument about the "thin end of the wedge." Wedges are never driven home in an organism whose character it is to bristle with contradictions and thrive upon them; and in a healthy organism wedges are not absorbed further than adaptation allows.

Another fact of importance, far too often forgotten, follows from the considerations we are now dealing with. No method or device adopted by any country from another ever works in the same way in the adopting country as in that from which it was imitated. A Gothenburg system of temperance reform or an Elberfeld system of relief would, in England, quickly be modified into something very different, by reason of the organic reactions of other elements of our social life. Even human ingenuity cannot graft a grape on to a thistle without subjecting the former to numerous modifications due to the influence of the latter's nature.

Again, we are compelled to remind the reformer that his schemes of betterment, however carefully thought out, can never be pushed in and made a part of society's life in the way he usually desires. Robert Owen had some really magnificent schemes; they were all failures, and were bound to be. The slow processes of growth and adaptation and organic reaction were not allowed for; the panaceas, like all panaceas, could not but lead to unexpected and disappointing results. It is

significant that nearly all successful improvements have grown from very small and often uncertain or tentative beginnings ; the Co-operative movement, the Friendly Societies, the hospital system, democratic education, are all instances in point. We cannot help elaborating beautiful paper schemes ; the tendency is an inveterate one, and perhaps ineradicable now, so great is the encouragement it has received from our successes in dealing with the forces of inorganic nature by means of elaborate calculation, which, in that field, are entirely justified. And so we find every one, from individual faddists to sober county councils and even Governments, preparing all kinds of schemes of wholesale improvement in the firm belief that they will "work." But they never work. They may grow into a valuable part of the social tissue ; or they may die away after causing some temporary discomfort. The only quite certain thing is that they will not act as a well-devised piece of mechanism would : they will operate in ways and produce effects unexpected and unforeseen by their inventors. Most of all will this be the case if, as so often happens, the reformer or the reforming agency has left out of account the preparedness of the organic society for the improvements contemplated. This is the special pitfall of the rich benefactor or millionaire reformer, who knows what he wants his workpeople or the public to do or to have, but does not know what these intended beneficiaries want to be or to do themselves, or are fit to be or do. But this leads us into a wider field, which is best left for later treatment.

The objection may be raised that we *do* make

sweeping changes and reforms quite successfully in many cases. I am not anxious to deny this; but I would qualify the statement a little. In the first place, such changes are never made as suddenly as we imagine. One of the least noticed but most certain facts of social life is the fact that society very seldom awakes to the existence of an evil while that evil is at its worst, but some time afterwards, when the evil is already in process of healing itself. The "bitter cry" of suffering follows the crisis—usually by many years; and the ostensible measures of reform, which result from the arousal of public interest or sympathy, come in to assist, not to begin, the amelioration. Most *new* evils, in other words, are old evils growing better. Nor are the reforms always new ones, so much as elaborations of processes which have begun to operate without any special "movement" to initiate them. Students of recent social history must be familiar with this. Society began to think seriously about outcast London when the outcasts were already beginning to struggle up from the abyss. It turned its attention to the over-crowding of the slum, when that over-crowding had already begun to diminish decade by decade. We awake now to the evil of sweating long after the worst days of sweated labour are past, even as in America the North awoke to the horrors of slavery in the South when that slavery was probably less horrid than it had ever been. We have recently made a new discovery of the awful fact that one-third of our population is living below the "poverty line" of a guinea a week income per family. Is it a new thing? The poverty of the population has

been decreasing for many years ; and the only *new* fact in the situation is that fewer families are without a possible livelihood than at any time for several generations past. The clamour for temperance reform becomes most insistent just when the members of the community are beginning to show real signs of becoming rather more temperate, and not when they are drinking their hardest.

All the evils are great enough still, in all conscience ; but they are not at their worst when the effort to remedy them is seriously undertaken. There are some exceptions, of course ; but these are mostly of a special class, connected with the increase of bodily disorders such as cancer and nervous breakdown. The rule applies, with but few exceptions, to the general ailments of the kind with which the social reformer is most concerned.

Now there is no simple explanation of this phenomenon. It is connected in obscure ways with the fact that (possibly by some instinct of self-preservation) we seem to be prevented from thinking too much about any suffering or evil, until the time is near at hand when that suffering or evil can be dealt with successfully. Society can seldom be induced to bother itself about any suffering, the removal of which requires really revolutionary treatment. It only becomes sensitive, sympathetic, and eager for reform, when reform is possible without too great an upheaval of its settled ways of life. But the point upon which I am insisting is quite clear, namely, that we must qualify the assertion that great social reforms can be and are successfully carried out with little regard to the organic growth of

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society, by the counter assertion that very few reforms are either as new or sudden as they appear to be.

We must qualify the assertion in another way. Few reforms are ever as successful as they are expected to be. And this for two reasons. Modern society, thanks to our "meddling," is always suffering from the strain of unequal progress or change. There is nearly always an unregenerate sediment, which the reform ought to carry along with it, and quicken into new life, but does not. We reform an overcrowded slum area, or an over-drunken section of the population, or an over-casualized class of labourers. But of the social units and groups concerned, not all are altered; many slip through the meshes of reform, either refusing to change their ways, or—perhaps more usually—unable to change them owing to too long habituation. And in proportion to its growing humanity or sentiment, society becomes less and less able or willing to shed its accumulations of waste matter. The result is that the evil "reformed" re-appears in smaller patches elsewhere. Bits of a new and very unregenerate slum crop up in Tottenham or Edmonton, after the cleansing of Shoreditch or Bethnal Green; insidious forms of intoxication appear in place of the drunkenness drastically dealt with; a new type of casual labourer creates a new problem after the old type has been abolished. This does not mean that there has not been improvement, and often a very great improvement; but only that the evil is not all done away with. Nor do I mean to imply that the partial failure of the remedy is wholly due to want of organic adaptation of the part of the society as a whole. Much of the difficulty is due to

want of *moral* adaptability on the part of the human units ; and some kinds of moral evil are very like some kinds of dirt—you cannot alter them, or annihilate them, but can only move them from one place to another. Yet in all cases the cure is hindered by the single fact that the organism is not prepared beforehand throughout its tissue for the reforming change.

One other fact is to be borne in mind. No drastic reform or social remedy ever fails to produce a number of unexpected and often very disconcerting effects ; and the more drastic it is, the more disconcerting are the consequences. We know what has often happened as a result of drastic dealing with drink, such as total prohibition before a population is ready for it. The actual drinking may be diminished ; but swindling deceptions and dishonesties have been increased, as well as new forms of drug-poisoning. It is for this reason that the success of great reforms is so often called in question, usually by rather pessimistic people. They point to new evils which have raised their heads in consequence of the disappearance of old ones. Was the emancipation of the negroes in America all a good thing ? Not only in the old slave States of the South, but all through the United States the very serious “new problems” resulting from this one reform seem to be uppermost in men’s minds. The society was not ready for the absorption of a huge alien mass of a particular kind—and is not ready yet ; and the results of that unpreparedness of the organism are obvious everywhere. In this respect, at any rate, society is very like our physical bodies. There are some drastic cures for some

of our ailments which are quite effective in dispelling the particular trouble of which we are conscious. A "one day cure" for a cold or a "one hour cure" for a headache is quite likely to produce the cure promised. But it is more than probable that the sufferer will soon discover that an unpleasant pain in the limbs has taken the place of the vanished cold, or that the headache has been exchanged for a disturbed digestion. The organism will not be hurried out of one state into another without protesting.

I have urged these considerations in order to show that we cannot, by quoting the success of sweeping reforms, brush aside the necessity of taking growth and organic adaptation into account. *All* reforms, if scrutinized closely, illustrate rather than contradict the principle that heed must be paid to the measure of preparedness and of adaptability of an organic social structure and tissue, of which the laws of growth do to a great extent hold good. Both the order in which reforms come, and the results of those reforms, are illustrations of the fact that much slow preparation of the "social organism" is necessary before the remedy for any evil can be applied. Society is not an inorganic mass into which this or that improvement can be introduced without much thought about the effects which will follow by reason of the natural reactions of the whole.

And yet I am still on the side of the reformer, and not on that of the do-nothing doubter. And for this reason: The limits of social adaptability are not by any means fixed as rigorously as in the case of a true

organism of a high order ; and the processes of adaptation can be enormously hastened. Upon this fact the reformer may properly insist. For the adaptation is not that of a physical organism, but that of a life in which mental forces count for much more than in any organic body we know ; and the processes of mental adaptation are far more rapid than those of vital organic adaptation. The habits of human society can be changed more easily than the habits of the cells and tissues and nerves of the body. And, more important still, the subordination of the simpler social processes to the forces which we have called spiritual, makes possible even more rapid changes than are prepared for by alterations of habit and attitude. But of these qualifications, more will be said in later chapters.

Let us turn our attention now to the laws of growth as they affect the reform of the individual members of society. This is probably a more interesting matter to most of us than the reform of groups or institutions or society as a whole ; for we are neither Robert Owens nor millionaires nor dictators, but ordinary citizens who may be quite content to improve ourselves and the condition of a few individuals with whom we may be brought into contact. Now there is, of course, no doubt about the organic nature of every individual, with its natural limits of adaptability and its necessary processes of gradual adaptation to change. We are not in much danger of leaving this out of account, in its obvious meaning ; nor are we likely to neglect the differences of natural ability to respond to this or that treatment. We do not try to make a

cripple into a navvy, nor a very stupid child into an electrical engineer. Indeed, in a crude way we sometimes make too much of the individual differences, especially when we group people roughly into classes or types according to their supposed natural fitness for particular occupations or duties or functions. Class and caste prejudices, and probably race prejudices too, are responsible for many errors of this kind. Under the influence of some stupid generalization or dictum, such as Aristotle's assertion that slaves are naturally adapted for nothing better than a slave life, or the half-feudal belief that there are only three generations from the soil to the soil, many societies have denied, and even deny to-day, the fitness for anything but a very humble kind of activity of large sections of their populations. The disbelief in the desirability of advanced education for the working classes is one result of this—due to a very erroneous idea that their natural adaptability is definitely limited in a way in which that of the more fortunate classes is not; and we are hardly yet alive to the fact that there are no such differences between classes, so far as the individual potentialities of many of the members of each class are concerned; and that to act upon the opposite assumption involves a disastrous waste of good material.

But in other and truer ways we do not recognize enough the individual differences of capacity to respond to treatment. We universalize treatment as though no such differences existed. We build up systems of education for all, and run whole masses of individuals into the same mould; we devise some scheme of

improvement or help, and apply it to all the members of a given class or neighbourhood ; we hit upon a good idea or method, and try to make it do for many diverse individuals. And then we discover, when the results are less satisfactory than we hoped, that our teaching of the children, or our reformation of the unemployed, or our relief of the poor, are all marred by defective classification—a very natural consequence of the method of treatment adopted.

But we are now running up against very thorny questions, with which we need not deal at present. It is clear that we must have general treatment and general schemes of betterment of all kinds—if we are to do anything at all collectively. No one but the most anarchical individualist would now deny this. And the justification lies in the fact that human nature is pretty much the same in all individuals, up to a point. There is, for instance, a measure of education and training suited for the great majority of normal children, just as there is a particular kind of food best suited for all normal infants. The need for more careful discrimination comes in after a certain stage has been reached, and after the development of the individual potentialities has proceeded some way. Most of all is the need apparent when the complex growth of the life, with its incessant reactions of potentialities upon environment and of environment upon potentialities, has produced those tremendous differences which really individualize every grown man or woman, separating by great gulfs the next-door neighbours in a slum or the brothers in a single family.

And this brings us to the real difficulty in all our reforming treatment. Our chief danger is that of forgetting that whatever change is introduced must be complete, not partial ; must harmonize with the whole individual life, and not only with a bit of it. And this means, not merely that the whole individual character must be considered, though that is important enough ; but that the organic life of the individual as a whole must be taken into account. That is to say, we have to consider the whole social setting and environment, as well as the individual potentialities—the soil as well as the soul, the social medium as well as the social character of the individual. When we were dealing with society as an “organic” whole, we had little need to pay attention to the conditioning environment, for every big society largely constitutes its own social environment. But when we turn to the individual members, we find that we cannot regard them as subject to the laws of growth, without remembering that there are two great factors in that growth—the organism, with its possibilities, and the soil, with *its* possibilities ; and that the two cannot be separated. It is not enough, when we contemplate some treatment, to consider carefully John Smith’s character and capacities ; to think how these will react to the change, how far they are capable of adaptation. We must also bring into view John Smith’s social setting—his street and home and family, his work and pay, his friends and neighbours, and their attitudes and standards and customs—and consider the probable reactions of all this setting to the change which we desire. Now I do not intend here to raise

the old controversy about character and circumstances, nor to ask which is most important, or should be thought of most. When we are dealing with the social unit, they are inseparable; mistakes begin when we leave either out of account. Individualists, or people who insist that character is far the most important, may urge, if they like, that if you alter the character enough, the circumstances will be altered too. No doubt; *if* the alteration is complete enough. By the *really* converted soul, the environment is converted too. For the *really* reformed drunkard, the corner public-house is immaterial, or even a help—as the bottle of gin was to Tennyson's Northern Cobbler. For the *really* reformed gambler, the abundance of street bookies is of no consequence. For the *really* repentant thief or blasphemer, an atmosphere of dishonesty and blasphemy contains no temptations. So, possibly, for the *really* clean housewife, the sooty atmosphere of the city is even a stimulus; and for the *really* thrifty man, intermittent earnings—the usual condition of unthrift—act as an incentive rather than a hindrance. That is to say, if all of us were *really* reformed in character, the then environment would be reformed too, automatically, for its quality as a reagent—its power of affecting us—would be totally changed. But, unfortunately, most of our efforts stop short of this high goal; and therefore we need to remember the whole of the life of each individual—soul and soil alike—and work in reference to that. Gradually this necessity is being realized, at any rate so far as the immediate family environment of any individual is concerned. We do not now expect to effect great

improvement by getting a boy or girl into what is called decent occupation if the family life is left undecent, any more than we expect to reform a girl who is falling into bad ways if we leave her at home with a mother who is a prostitute and a father who is a scoundrel. But it is to be feared that a vast amount of effort is still being wasted owing to neglect of the larger elements of growth. We try to teach thrift, when the general scheme of life is necessarily unthrifty; we try to teach temperance, and leave the public-house the only bright spot in the street, and "standing a drink" the only easy mode of showing friendliness or hospitality. And in so doing we are neglecting the conditions of the growth of a habit, and of the true organic adaptability for reform.

Yet, it may be objected, our work is necessarily piecemeal. So be it; but in that case there is all the more need of a co-operation of effort which may make it possible for the whole life to be considered at once. And at present all social endeavour is robbed of much more than half of its due effect because it is both piecemeal and partial; the thousands of would-be reformers are working away at odds and ends and fragments of their material, not even uniting in order that at least several fragments may be treated harmoniously and together.

I have a strong suspicion that very little of all this talk about the organic nature of society and the necessary processes of growth will have any impression whatever upon the reformer who finds himself face to face with the problems of the slum. He is not likely to abate one jot or tittle of his reforming zeal

and his meddlesome interference ; and it is by no means certain that he should. Not until we have considered all the forces at work shall we be in a position to assess the due importance of each kind. Then, but only then, we may be able to say how far our non-natural meddling is justified.

But of the vital processes generally, as applied to social life, a final word may be added here. We have not considered them all : the processes of struggle and selection among the social units have been purposely left for consideration at a later stage. But we may anticipate our conclusions by suggesting that the biological sociologist, who is almost always at daggers drawn with society's meddlings and reforming tendencies, often finds himself in an untenable position, through the exaggeration of his biological point of view. It is quite certain that no natural processes are allowed to produce their appropriate effects in the social life we live to-day. Wholesale interference is the rule—and, let us admit it, usually blind, ignorant interference. We are thwarting nature at every turn ; and the biological extremist is commonly reduced to a state of pessimism exceeding even the gloom of Herbert Spencer in his bitterest moods. His position has been well put by Mr. E. A. Ross, in a passage which I would willingly quote, but must be content to summarize here.

We *need* nature's processes of struggle, selection, and elimination of the unfit. Society is becoming clogged with its unfit, whom we insist upon keeping alive by checking every natural agent of selection. The life-struggle is nowhere allowed to do its work by killing

off the useless and worse than useless people : we have confined it within walls of humanitarian sentiment and vicious contrivance, in order that it may kill no one and maim as few as possible. Disease, once the mightiest of all nature's selective agents, now has its talons cut by hospitals and homes and cures, which are incessantly engaged in patching up its proper victims. War—an almost equally potent agent—used to kill off the weak and cowardly, and leave the strong and brave to survive. Now we have so arranged it that it kills the strong, and leaves the weak at home—to multiply. The economic struggle, the struggle for the means of living, is not what it once was. By laws of property and inheritance on the one hand, by devices of charity and relief on the other, we keep alive the lazy and unfit at both ends of the social scale. Sexual selection is similarly interfered with, both by our monogamous institutions and still more by the economic hindrances which prevent the mating of the fittest with the fittest. Selection (that is, destruction) by the natural consequences of our own vices is also prevented. We do not allow the drunkards to be weeded out by their drunkenness, but half cure the dipsomaniac and defend the would-be drink-suicide by all sorts of temperance reforms.

True, our movements of “progress” do kill off a few people ; but almost invariably the wrong ones. We have always burnt our heretics and crucified our Christs, and now in the fiercest political struggles we see to it that the revolutionaries who are killed are the strongest, the most energetic, the most vital. Moreover, all our

civilization is a huge system of meddling. Our standards of every sort, from those of decency and comfort to those of humanity and morals, set up, between us and the natural processes, barriers of every kind, from clothes and houses to laws and institutions. And the influence of religion is the worst of all. In its highest form, it sterilizes the best members of society by the celibacy imposed upon the men and women who are admittedly holiest; in all its forms it saves the unfit from destruction by insisting upon mercy and pity, and, by teaching charity, supports the feeble and the failures.

What is the net result of it all? The multiplication of degenerates at the expense of those who are not degenerate. And the further our progress advances the worse the effects become. We even shrink now from the killing of our murderers and the permanent segregation of our worst criminals. We try to stop every kind of suffering, just because it is suffering—without stopping to ask whether it is not also salutary. No wonder we have problems heaped upon problems, when the root evil of degeneracy is so wantonly fostered!

We shall consider in a later chapter how far the warnings of the biologist ought to be allowed to check our wilful interferences. But in reference to the extremists among the biological sociologists this at least is clear: either they have got their premises very wrong indeed, or else all society's reforming purposes are marks of its decay, all its ideals are will-o'-the-wisps designed to lure it on to destruction, and its so-called upward path a road leading downward to death. If we

intend to keep company with the reformer any longer, we must be prepared to subordinate the biological considerations to others of a very different kind, not to exalt them into the supreme guides of social progress.

CHAPTER IV

SOCIETY CONSIDERED AS SUBJECT TO THE LAWS OF MIND

WE have now considered social change from two points of view: first, as a result of external pressures; secondly, as a form of organic adaptation to changing conditions. In both cases the changes would appear to be necessarily slow; and in so far as the influences indicated have been dominant, the corresponding social changes have been very slow indeed. The patriarchal family, for example, with its institutions and life, and the village community, with *its* institutions and life, took many centuries to form; the adjustment of an "organic society" to the conditions of city life requires many generations to complete. But innumerable changes take place far more rapidly than this; and in modern society change is hastened along every line with a rapidity to which "natural" processes show no parallel. The last chapter brought into view two of the conditions of these quicker changes. We noted that preparedness for change on the part of society depends much more upon mental adaptations of a thinking being than upon the slow organic adaptations of a living

being; and that the forces which now produce change most obviously, were human purposes and aims, rather than the natural forces of environmental pressure or the natural ends of organic growth and development. Society is certainly pushed along its path; society also undoubtedly grows into this or that new state. But society, as we know it, still more certainly feels and thinks its way into new conditions of itself, and guides its course by its own purposes and self-evolved ends. It remains for us, therefore, to consider first the mental life of society, and secondly the purposes of society and their origin and significance; and in the present chapter we will discuss the mental life of society.

Perhaps the transition from what we may call the biology of society to the psychology of social life may be made in this way. In all the higher forms of life, activities are largely controlled by the two factors of instinct and habit. These may be regarded as being mid-way between the simple life-processes and the mind or thought-processes. Each implies some special modification of cells and nerves and organs; each also implies at least some mental element in the form of feeling. In instinct, the feeling has become, as it were, automatic, and thought does not enter in at all. In habit, the special connexions in the mind are formed by degrees, more or less consciously at first, and often with thought (at any rate on the part of animals that do think). It is instinct in a dog to lap water or turn round before lying down; or in a chicken to peck at anything; or in a young human being to close its fingers on everything it touches. It is habit in the dog

to jump up at a door, or go to his particular corner, or to perform a laboriously acquired trick; it is habit also which governs about three-quarters of our actions throughout our waking life, from our dressing in the morning to our walking upstairs and going to bed at night. The value of instinct lies in the fact that it supplies the animal organism with sets of reactions necessary to its life, which its mind (if it has one) could not possibly evolve or produce in time. The value of habit is that it makes automatic and easy many processes which would otherwise require much conscious effort and perhaps thought. If we regard instinct as a printed list of instructions given by our ancestors, then we may regard habit as a kind of shorthand of mental life, compiled by the individual, saving both time and labour. But each may be said to have its peculiar dangers. Too much instinct fills up life with automatic processes, at the expense of the growth of consciousness and variation, and so hinders development of the species. Too much habit fills up life with processes which become almost automatic, and at any rate unconscious, and so hinders the growth of intelligence and the progress of the individual. As a general principle, it may be said that the value of instinct diminishes as intelligence grows; and that the value of habit, as applied to all simple and necessary actions, increases as intelligence finds more to do. But habit also becomes more dangerous (exactly as shorthand does on the part of a lecture audience) if it is allowed to usurp the place of thought as applied to the higher processes of life. In human life, instinct is of diminishing value,

and habit of increasing value ; but there is always a danger of retardation of progress resulting from habits of mind or thought, that is, from habitual ways of thinking about things, or mental processes which have been allowed to become automatic and only partly conscious. Without the help of habit, the philosopher would have no time to think at all, but would find his entire day occupied with the troublesome activities of dressing, eating, walking, and other trivial matters. But too much habit is equally inimical to thinking ; for the habits of thought which save our intelligence the trouble of criticizing and thinking things out are the most certain causes of mental stagnation and old-fogeyism.

All this is, of course, very familiar ; but as applied to society it is not quite so obvious. Here we may, of course, leave instinct out of account. The existence of instinct depends upon the gradual modification of cells and structure which is handed down from parent to offspring ; but as society is not an individual in a chain of individuals, instinct is inapplicable to it. But habit is a very important factor in the life of society, just as in the life of every human individual. And, if we regard it on its mental side, that is, as certain habitual connexions of feeling or idea, it is found to be an almost exact counterpart to the individual's habit. In both cases, habits are acquired in very much the same way. As individuals, we acquire our habits both unconsciously and with more or less conscious effort. In the former case, they are either forced upon us by nurses or parents ; or we grow into them by natural unconscious

processes. In the latter case, we acquire them by more or less conscious imitation ; or by devising and thinking out ways of doing things, and then letting these ways become habitual. So, too, with society. Many habits are acquired unconsciously. In all early societies we find habitual modes of action governing most of the life. No one knows why ; the habits have no reason behind them ; they have never been thought out. Sometimes they have been forced upon the tribe or group. In one primitive group, we find that need, in the shape of a limited supply of food, has produced a habit of infanticide ; in another group, that necessity of a different kind has produced an equally unpleasant habit of destroying all middle-aged parents. Sometimes the habits have just grown up, as habits will, by accident. Fixed ways of doing all manner of things, from conducting a fight to conducting the trial of a suspected criminal, appear as the habitual modes of reaction to the appropriate stimulus in all early societies ; and in few cases are the reasons known to the members of the society. *We* may see the reason for the particular habit now ; anthropologists can explain why and how this or that extraordinary habit arose ; but not so the agents themselves. Their understanding of the purpose of their habitual actions is often limited to the knowledge that some infants were killed by their parents, and parents of forty-five solemnly slain by their eldest son, because it was the proper and usual thing to do.

But in later days, as societies have become more reflective and thoughtful, we find them first imitating

the habits of other societies, then devising ways of doing things with a purpose, and then allowing these ways to become habitual. And in this latter case, at all events, they do know the reason why, to some extent at least, and the habits are the result of conscious processes of thought—though both the thought and consciousness of purpose tend to disappear in proportion as the habit becomes fixed. To this class belong our social habits of action in numerous recurrent situations, such as our proceedings in the discovery, trial, and punishment of crimes, our appropriate conduct of funerals or marriages, our customary methods of ratifying a bargain or paying a call, and a host of other matters. And they resemble the individual's habits, such as a butler's habitual way of laying a dinner table or a housemaid's habitual mode of making (or mis-making) a fire, both in the fact that the processes contain some element of thought and purpose in the first instance, and in the further fact that the thought tends more and more to drop out of them as the habit becomes more and more fixed. And, as with individuals so with societies, the habit varies with the particular idiosyncrasies of each. Just as no two men have quite the same habit of shaving, so no two societies have quite the same habit of conducting a trial. But the mode of action is habitual for each individual or society.

Now in the individual the habit is, as it were, partly embedded in the tissue of the organism—in subtle modifications of nerve and muscle and structure. But it has also, in all cases, a mental counterpart ; it is connected

with some modification of feeling or thought ; it has a particular mode of the mind belonging to it. My habits of shaving or running upstairs or playing an air on the piano are all in my fingers or feet, and the nerves and muscles connected with them ; but they are also in my mind, in so far as they consist also in connexions of feeling and idea which are a part of my mind. But where are we to look for the habits of society ? The analogy still holds good : they are embedded in the "organism," in the institutions of police or law or what not to which the actions belong ; but not only that. To stop at this point in the search would be like stopping short of the explanation of piano-playing by saying it resides merely in the fingers of the person who can play without thinking about it. But that is never more than partly true. The moment you strike a false note, you will find that, however much you may have been playing unconsciously, your mind was really doing or superintending the work in the background—subconsciously. So with all social habits. They too have their mental counterpart, and are to be found in the mind of society. And this is the clue to the social mind in its simplest form—namely, the subconscious mind which lies behind all the habitual processes of social behaviour.

In its early stages, this mind of society, or mental element in social life, is called *tradition*, and the corresponding habits are usually called customs. And tradition may be said to include the whole body of connected feelings and ideas (such as they are), which represent the mental side of all habitual or customary modes of social procedure. The entire mass of tradition

belonging to any society is greater than the content of any individual mind, and, in a real sense, independent of any individual minds. It outlives the latter; it dominates all new minds as they appear, and supplies them with an outfit of social feelings and ideas. It is the simplest form of the mental heritage of each generation: the simplest form of what is known as social heredity. Through it, the mental life of society is made continuous, and its purposes and aims made lasting.

We need not trouble ourselves with the question—Where is the social mind to be found?—further than to insist that it does not merely exist in the minds of the individual members of society, any more, perhaps, than our human minds exist merely in the changing cells of the brain cortex. This, at least, does not express what needs to be expressed about it. For the social mind is as coherent as the mind of an individual; it is greater than any single mind; and from it each one of the very diverse units of society takes very much of his mental content. It is at least truer to say that the social mind makes the individual minds, than to say that it consists solely of those individual minds.

It is to be noted that the laws of habit apply very closely to the habits and tradition-mind of society, especially in the matter of their value, dangers, and mode of formation. Like the individual mind, the social mind is nearly all habit at the first; and very rightly, for this is the great condition of social safety. Too much thought or reflection or criticism—those chief solvents of mental habit—would be destructive.

At all times, also, social habit, and its mental counterpart, tradition, are invaluable forms of economy of effort; but they are also a very grave danger, not only by perpetuating bad ways, but by checking progress, through the deadening of mind-life. A progressive society is one whose mind is more than tradition—ready to criticize and overhaul all social habits, and modify them to suit new purposes. For tradition only represents a simple and rather primitive form of mind—largely subconscious, and inclined to be stagnant.

But when we ask the question—What is meant by a social mind which is more than tradition?—it is not easy to frame a simple answer. Perhaps the difficulty may be lessened if we approach the subject from another side. All institutions and established ways of doing things are, in the early stages of social life, the external side of social habits of mind—embodiments of tradition in the different structures and parts of the social “organism.” But at later stages, when society becomes more a conscious, thinking, progressive being, they are more than this. They are a reflection or embodiment, to some extent at least, of systematic thought and purpose. Now the distinction between habitual, customary, traditional ideas and feelings, and systematic thought and purpose, is the clue to the distinction between social tradition, or the social mind in its earlier form, and social thought, or the social mind in its later form. This distinction is familiar in the psychology of the individual, in which it appears as the difference between an association of ideas and a system of ideas. The former consists in a mass of feelings and

ideas which are connected together by a kind of accidental contact, in the order in which they have been given by experience. The latter consists in a really coherent scheme of ideas and thoughts, connected together, not accidentally, but by design, selected and worked up into a scheme or system because of their significance in relation to a single purpose. The former is usually planless and purposeless—so far as any conscious guiding purpose is concerned. The latter is always consciously purposeful, and its whole plan is arranged in virtue of the purpose which it is designed to serve. Now all the feelings and ideas which belong to habit and tradition as such are merely associations; and simple association of feeling and idea is enough to carry on habit and tradition, and enough to explain traditional institutions in social life. For example, the institution of funerals, with all their extravagant demonstrations of mourning among most semi-civilized peoples, and with their hardly less extravagant display of black clothing among the poorer classes everywhere in our society, is an illustration of a traditional institution resting on association of ideas. The ideas of death, respect, extra food and drink, and large quantities of crape, are associated in the minds of the people; and this association is, for them, habitual but quite accidental. The institution and corresponding mode of customary behaviour with its underlying mass of feeling and idea, may have had a meaning and a reason once, or we may nowadays be able to read a meaning into it. But this is not always so; nor does it affect the fact that for the people concerned the association of ideas has no real

meaning or reason, except the customary one that it has always been so, and is therefore right and proper. If asked why they do not put on bright clothes and manifest their joy at the release of a soul from the burden of the flesh, they will be very puzzled and angry. It will not occur to many of them to reply that it is their own loss which they are demonstrating, combined with an assertion of a belief in a very crude sort of immortality; and that the funeral customs of black dress, a feast for the mourners, and perhaps a preceding wake, rest upon an odd combination of ideas and beliefs which are now hardly remembered more than the idea underlying the practice of leading an officer's horse behind his bier.

The inevitable tendency of all associations of ideas is to end in mental habit; and they never lead beyond this. But a system of ideas or thoughts is very different. The difference is as great as that between a proposition of Euclid intelligently understood, and the same proposition learned by heart by a dull schoolboy. In the latter case it is a mere jingle of associated words, leading nowhere, incapable of further application. In the former it is an intelligent scheme of ideas, leading on to new truths and new applications of knowledge. And the essence of a system of ideas is that it is ordered and governed throughout by a ruling principle or purpose or aim.

All our minds (on the intellectual side) are made up, in varying proportions, of mere associations of feeling and idea, and of systems of thought, the one representing the habitual element, the other the purposeful and

progressive element. And in the social mind and its manifestations the same combination exists. We have seen how, up to a certain point, the habits (and habitual institutions) of society are the reflection and embodiment of tradition-mind. But if we look closer, nowadays, we shall find that all our institutions to some extent, and a few to a very great extent, reflect and embody a higher form of social mind—the form which we identify with systems of ideas and thoughts. We have no special name for this higher form ; we may be content to call it simply *social thought*. But we may regard it as being just as real as the tradition-mind of society, just as much independent of our individual minds, just as much greater and completer than they. Every institution which really means something is an embodiment of mind-systems far greater than can be found in any single individual's mind. The thought-systems and purposes embodied in an army or a school, for example, are more numerous and more complex than are contained in any one person's mind—though every intelligent citizen's mind contains some of them. And the whole scheme of thoughts and purposes embodied in all our institutions we call the higher mind of our society. And, from this point of view, we regard each member of society not merely as a unit in a social aggregate or a cell in a social organism, but as a part of a vast mind-system from which each is perpetually drawing his thoughts and purposes, and to which each is perpetually contributing new thought and purpose—in so far, of course, as he thinks about society at all.

Let us for a moment pause to take stock of the

position which we have reached. We have considered society, with its groupings, relationships, institutions and activities, from three points of view : first, as subject to the conditions of an external physical universe, with forces and pressures moulding and limiting it ; secondly, as subject to the conditions of an organic nature, with natural potentialities and necessary organic reactions and adaptations to changing environment ; and, thirdly, as subject to the conditions of mind, with its associations of feeling and idea gradually leading on to systems of thought and purpose. We are tempted to regard these three kinds of subordination as the marks of three successive stages through which society has passed, and to mark off a physical-pressure stage for the early days of primitive society, a growth stage for the rather later periods, and finally a thought-and-purpose stage for the social life of our own day. But any such division would be very misleading, as well as unduly flattering to ourselves and our present society. The most we can say is that the different sets of conditions are of varying importance at different stages of social development. The external, physical forces seemed to predominate before the dawn of history, and the social formation of primitive peoples shows most clearly the result of such pressures. The social structures and characteristics of the cave-dwellers, the forest hunters, the nomad tribes of the desert, the herders of the plains and steppes, all alike show the influence of the conditions which dominated their life, producing, according to the differences of those conditions, social groupings, differing so widely from one another as to be hardly

recognizable as members of the same species. It is difficult to believe that a family of Fuegians and Jacob's household can belong to the same order. But then none of the groups was merely the result of the one set of conditions. The life-forces and conditions of organic growth were always at work; and from the very first the influence of mind, if only in its simplest forms, was making itself felt.

So, too, when we turn to later stages of development in which subordination to the conditions of growth seems the most prominent fact. Here we find everywhere the life pushing outwards along much the same lines—drawing the isolated family group into a larger group, with accompanying complexity of structure and differentiation of functions, leading on eventually to the organic goal of social life—the nation. And now the resulting groups are much more easily recognizable as belonging to a single species, the same growth leading to the same goal in China as in England, in Ancient Babylon as in modern London. But for all that, the superficial sameness is not that of growing organisms of the same kind; differences of physical pressures still lead to wide differences of internal organization, and differences of mental habit and attitude and idea modify the quality of the life in countless ways.

A still later stage, in which the conditions of mind shall be the chief determinants of progress, must be left to the imagination, for it certainly does not yet exist. But it is conceivable that some day, when we think of societies, we shall see them chiefly as vast mind-systems, full of conscious significance in every part, each organ

and relationship designed to serve a purpose, incessantly worked upon and improved by the ceaseless effort of the society to think out and realize a veritable City of God. But in this stage, too, the effects of physical pressures will still be noticeable, and the limitations of organic growth will not have disappeared. But the dominance of mind will be the chief agent in all change.

Now, in considering social change, our great difficulty is to keep in view all the sets of conditions we have so far indicated; and most of all is it hard to understand the interactions of them all, and to estimate the force of each in any given society at any given time. This estimate, indeed, we can only guess at; but at least we can try to remember that all are at work together. Unfortunately, this is just what we seldom do, and for this cause every sociologist, and still more every social practitioner, suffers from a kind of myopia, by which his field of vision is narrowed down to one or perhaps two sets of conditions which he treats as all-important. Moreover, there can be little doubt that the conditions which have hitherto been most neglected or least understood have been those which we have called mental. Social theory has been largely in the hands of the economist and the biologist, and neither the economic nor the biological interpretation of society is likely to give much consideration to society regarded as a system of thought and idea. Social practice, on the other hand, is not inclined to wait for careful analysis; and though, in the conflict of rival schools, it is possible to distinguish two generally opposing factions—those

who pin their faith to alterations of environment on the one side, and on the other, those who believe that changes of mind and character are of first importance—it cannot be said that the latter have in any way realized what is implied in the assertion, not only that “the mind is the man,” but also that society is mind, and mind-systems the clue to the real significance of most of our present social life. We have good reason, therefore, to elaborate more fully the implications of the “social mind.”

Let us first emphasize the fact that the mental elements underlying any social institution or relationship may and do range from a mass of simple feeling and idea, with its accompanying characteristic of custom, or use-and-wont, up to a system of pure thought and reason, ordered in harmony with consistent, conscious purposes, and marked by enlightenment and freedom from all prejudices. In even the most advanced society (by which we usually mean our own), every institution and relationship has behind it a mixture of elements of every grade—except the highest. That is to say, analysis of the mental elements underlying any of our institutions—even the newest and most consciously and thoughtfully established—will bring to light a certain quantity of simple association of feeling and idea, with a good deal of prejudice or bias connected with it, side by side with a certain quantity of thought and purpose and harmony with the general scheme of our life. We never get away from the masses of unanalysed feeling and bias, however thoughtful and critical we are ; and at the same time, we never fail to find some element of

thought and conscious purpose connected with even the most hoary and venerable and stupid institutions, however much we have just taken these on trust from our ancestors.

Now the possibilities of change in any society or with regard to any social institution, depend in part upon the degree in which the masses of feeling and associations of ideas are really tempered by thought and conscious purpose, are in process of being analysed by criticism and harmonized with a coherent scheme of social purposes. For this is the real test of part of the preparedness for change, of readiness for re-formed social conduct. If any society has so far advanced as to have, as its guide in life, a fairly coherent system of thoughts and a fairly harmonious scheme of purposes, then that society is prepared to undergo, with comparative safety, changes which would quite demoralize a society less advanced. This point, and its implications, will be elaborated more fully later. At present it will be enough to illustrate the bearing of what has been said upon some current suggestions of reform.

Let us take one of our most important institutions, that of monogamous marriage. We are all conscious of the general purposes for which it exists. As is often the case with old and very important institutions, it is not only sanctioned by religion, but its purposes are also, in a general way, defined for us by religion (as in the marriage service), and it is hedged in within certain limits both by religion and law (as by the table of prohibited degrees of relationship). For many centuries we have accepted the institution so defined and limited,

with very little thought or criticism. The institution has become a habit, in fact, and it has not occurred to most people to ask how far its purposes are in consonance with any new elements in the general aims of society. We refrain from falling in love with our aunts or great-uncles, as a matter of course ; but subject to such accepted restrictions, we follow our inclination in love and marriage, choosing as husband or wife whoever takes our fancy most for any reason or jumble of reasons. The whole institution and the activities connected with it rest upon a deep bed of tradition, made peculiarly firm (happily for us) both by centuries of religious feeling and also by an unconscious or half-conscious instinct of race-safety.

But in the ferment of thought and criticism which characterizes a "progressive" age, certain discoveries are made. In the first place, it is found, by the pioneers of a new science—the science of race-culture or eugenics—that the institution, as now established and used, does *not* harmonize with the ends of a healthy society. As more comes to be known about the conditions of health, and especially about the conditions of inherited health and vigour, it is inevitable that this end—namely, the production of a healthy and vigorous stock for our population—should be elevated into a position of very great importance among the conscious ends of social life, especially by those people who have made most study of the conditions referred to. Among these, there are some extremists who maintain that the whole institution of monogamy conflicts with the attainment of these ends. With their proposals we need not concern ourselves here. But a more moderate party of reformers,

led by Mr. Galton, find fault with the customary, habitual, accepted ways in which any kind of person, weak or strong, marries and is allowed to marry any other sort of person ; since the result in many cases is that children are born who are a sure source of weakness and ill-health in the society. All this is quite undeniably true ; but now mark the difficulties. Mr. Galton would like to break the old social habits, with their background of religious sanction, by which thousands of people are permitted every year to make "unfit" marriages. Can this be done? In some individual cases, perhaps in a few very reasonable groups of society, it is possible that a full realization of the importance of the ends which marriage ought to serve may restrain people from falling in love unsuitably or marrying "unfit" mates, or marrying at all if they themselves are "unfit." But all such people would have transcended habit, and would be guiding their action by motives of conscious thought and purpose. But the majority of the population is not ready to transcend habit in this way, or to act "reasonably," especially as their habitual mode of action has on its side not only the religious sanction and the feelings connected with it, but also the more powerful feelings of sex-impulse and "love." These feelings are only kept in check and forced to move on orderly lines, for most people, by very strong custom and very strong religious fear or respect. The great mass of the members of society will certainly not change their habits in the matter of falling in love and marrying just in order to promote the reasonable end of a more vigorous and

healthy race, nor even to attain the quite personal aim of having strong and vigorous children themselves. Recognizing this difficulty, Mr. Galton urges that we should grow a new habit, with new religious sanction and feeling behind it, to take the place of the old. But this is not the way in which a progressive change can take place. Firmly fixed social habits, with their deep accretions of feeling, can be altered in two ways—by force, or by enlightenment. Force, in the shape of the imposed will of a determined section of society, might restrain the habit within certain bounds ; or society as a whole might come to realize clearly the necessity of subordinating individual preferences to the social purposes of health and strength. In the latter case, some of the habitual elements connected with the institution of marriage would be altered, and elements of conscious thought and purpose substituted. The latter would probably become habitual too in the course of time, but, on the assumption that society is really becoming more thoughtful and purposeful, never so habitual as the old elements which had been displaced. And most emphatically, the oldest habits of all—our habitual feelings of religious veneration—cannot be changed into a new set of similar habits. The feelings which we wish to produce—feelings of respect for the race and for posterity—will not be religious in the same sense, nor habitual in any sense ; they will spring from a new soil, the conscious realization of new purpose and aim ; and though they may become strong and fixed, their strength or fixity will never be the same as that which is derived from centuries of unquestioned tradition

and established custom. In other words, the social habit must give place to a social thought-system, with its consciousness of purposes to be served; and the resulting social behaviour will be upon a different level, motivated by conscious recognition of some social ends; and although on this level, as on all levels of life, behaviour will tend to become habitual if undisturbed too long, the fixity of the habits will be conditioned by new influences, and will not repose upon the old factors of the traditional, the accepted, and the customary.

Another set of reformers, among whom may be reckoned some socialists, would alter the institutions of both marriage and the family. They argue that the old tradition-feelings connected with both are now dissolving; and that the traditional purposes served are not now those of which society is or ought to be most fully conscious. The religious and semi-religious feelings connected with family life are now decaying fast—so it is said; among the middle classes of society Mr. H. G. Wells has discovered that they are no more than “clotted cant and habituation to things as they are.” Certainly, if it is true that respect for the marriage tie is disappearing, if respect for parents or “filial piety” is a worn-out and effete virtue, if respect for and love of the home is only a pretence, then it is not impossible that change is imminent, and probably necessary. And further, if it is true that many of the best women flatly refuse the traditional view of matrimony as their right and proper profession, and a few of the best men chafe under the traditional assumption of their “overlordship,” then again some

change is imminent, and probably necessary. Of this we shall have more to say in a later chapter. But let it be noted here that both the need for change and the possibility of change depend upon the extent to which the social habit and tradition are really undermined by the solvents of thought and criticism and conception of new ends and aims. If this process has proceeded far and spread widely through society, then we may at least assert that the society is partly prepared for reformation of the institutions upon a new basis.

I say "partly prepared," for so far we have only considered the mental preparedness of society on its negative side. We have yet to make clear what is the positive condition of change—if that change is to be safe or salutary. Returning for a moment to the individual, we may note that, as old habits are dissolved or undermined by thought, there ensues a period of danger. The swept and garnished chamber is open to the very unpleasant devils of riotous variety and instability. Some modern progressive individuals illustrate this danger by their very quick changes of principle and practice in both small things and great, from diet to religious belief. In social life there is the same danger. A period of instability is a very likely sequel to decaying habits and conventions, as to decaying faiths; and society may become like a ship without its sheet anchor, at the mercy of numerous cross-currents, causing movements which may be mistaken for progress but are certainly not progressive. Now there is only one condition of comparative safety at such a time. The sheet anchors of habit and tradition

may be loosened with impunity if the ship of society has both a clear consciousness of the course it wishes to steer, and also motive power enough to carry it in the desired direction. Or, putting metaphor aside, society or any part of it may, like individuals, face the dangers of instability and too great variety without much fear, provided that, when it passes out of the influence of tradition and its associations of feeling and idea, it passes into mental systems of thought and purpose which will steady it and keep it within bounds on the higher level. And this is the positive condition of preparedness for change in modern social life: the traditional stage of institutions and activities may be superseded if and when mental systems exist, strong enough, coherent enough, and widespread enough, to act surely as forces of social control and social guidance.

In any society in which this condition obtains, the dissolution of the traditional basis of any institution will not be followed by anarchy, for the simple reason that such a society will not emerge from associations of feeling and idea into empty space, but will pass on at once into the thought-systems ready to take their place. Nor will these thought-systems form a dangerous basis, if we assume—as we may—that they are the result of the collective thought of the society, based upon its experience of life, and in harmony with its deliberately chosen ends. In such a society the traditional institution of property or the family or anything else might be altered in numerous ways without producing the chaos which would follow in a society less advanced; the social members would, as a whole, be reflective and

reasonable enough to guide their conduct by the motives of accepted purpose and understood reasons, instead of the old control of habit and tradition.

Does any such society yet exist? Obviously not, though some groups in every civilized society may have reached the required level. But every society now existing is made up of individual units of whom the great majority are not yet "reasonable," but are very largely slaves of use-and-wont. They are not prepared for the control and guidance of thought-systems. Nor are there any such systems, thought-out and agreed upon, ready for them: the social mind, as a whole, is still in the tradition stage. Now it is very certain that, in the development of ordinary individuals, limits are set by the stage reached by their surrounding group as a whole—family, friends, neighbours, and fellow-citizens, with whom contact is felt. In a civilized community or group, the normal child passes, in its mental education, from very simple systems of thought to more and more complicated ones, from fairy tale and myth, to rule of three, and eventually to elaborate systems of causation which form the body of every science; and in its moral education, in the same way, it passes from stage to stage, from simple submission to necessity to obedience to accepted (though perhaps resented) authority; from that to the stage of guidance by tradition and respect for what is established; then to the stage of moral sense and conscience; and finally (in a few cases) to the stage of willing subordination to an intelligently grasped system of moral law. Not so the child of a backward or primitive group. For it, no

succession of mental systems is ready to lead the mind on from the simple to the very complex ; possibly it never even learns to count beyond five, never reaches any conception of causation more advanced than a theory of nature spirits and general "cussedness." And its moral progress is similarly limited by the fact that the highest standard of the tribe is blind obedience to ancient custom,—tradition at its dearest ; and the child's moral high-water mark is reached when it learns to capture a wife in the approved way—by violence—and torture suspected wrong-doers with all the appropriate ceremonies. We are not justified in saying that the savage child is incapable of quicker progress ; we can only say that progress is barred for it by the absence of more advanced conceptions or mental systems or standards from the social group in which it grows up.

Now the most civilized society of to-day is made up of patches of every sort, ranging from extreme backwardness to moderate intelligence and obedience to reasonable standards of life and conduct. The members of each patch are, as a whole, limited in their development by the content and atmosphere of that patch, not, of course, as decidedly limited as is the savage in a group removed from all direct contact with more advanced groups, but limited nevertheless, in spite of the near neighbourhood of groups on a higher level, and in spite of the permeation of ideas and thoughts and standards which goes on throughout every civilized society. Individual members of a backward group may, and sometimes do, pass on to the highest stage existing in the society ; and individual members of any

group may, and sometimes do, pass beyond the limits set by the existing stages of their society, thus becoming the pioneers of a new stage, or the inventors of new systems of thought and purpose. But of the masses composing all groups it is safe to assert that their individual adaptability, both mental and moral, will tend to become fixed by the time they are adult citizens ; and their collective adaptability will not be such as to enable them to pass easily beyond the limits of their group.

Translating all this into the concrete, it means that for the more ignorant and less reflective strata of society, whether rich or poor, high or low, the door is not open to those rational systems of thought and purpose which many reformers would like to introduce. Their lives are still in the stage of habitual conduct and traditional motive. As adult individuals, they are not adapted for a life in which deliberate thought and purpose take the place of unanalysed feeling and accepted rules of action. As groups, they are not adapted for a life which would be comparatively easy to people among whom criticism, reflection, and thoughtful ordering of means and ends had become a matter of course, forming a sort of atmosphere to which all were accustomed. Both as individuals and as groups, their mental equipment consists chiefly in masses of feeling and prejudice, and these supply the rule and guidance of their actions. They have their thought-systems, doubtless ; but, like their favourite literature, these are usually of the "tit-bit" kind, disconnected and disordered, lacking both the consistency and the coherence necessary to any true

system of thought and purpose which shall serve adequately the ends of life.

NOTE ON THE PART PLAYED BY INSTINCT IN INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIAL ACTION

It is necessary to guard against one or more misunderstandings which may arise in connexion with the use of the word "instinct" in this and other chapters. I have asserted that the value or importance of *pure* instinct diminishes as intelligence increases, meaning by this that the specific instinctive process, in its simple form, is less and less the complete determinant of action as intelligence becomes more active and the thought-processes more complex and important. But this does *not* mean that there ceases to be, at any stage, in any life, an instinctive element in most actions; indeed my whole contention is that the *conative* element of instinct at all events always lies behind our "willings" or decisions or choices of action, however thoughtful we may become. The process of instinct involves three elements—of perception, of feeling, and of conation or impulse towards the appropriate action or end. Increase of thought and reflection modifies the character of the first two elements in all sorts of ways; the element of impulse is also modified, but less so. But all three elements persist and are involved in many of the actions of every thoughtful grown-up man or woman. For example, when a man falls in love and gets married, his course of action can only be explained by reference to a specific instinctive process (or processes), the capacity

for which and the mode of its operation are inherited from his ancestors. But the elements of perception and feeling are enormously modified in the case of every educated, civilized man; the element of conation or impulse—the motive force—is far less modified, though of course, it may be checked by various conscious processes.

Throughout my argument I have thought it advisable to use the word *impulse*, rather than instinct, to designate that motive force which continually works in us. But my contention throughout is that this motive force, the clue to so many of our actions, very closely resembles instinct, and is probably closely connected with it, though the processes through which it works are very far removed from *pure* instinct, in which the elements are unmodified by conscious reflection or experience or the conditions of social life.

As to society, it will be seen that I trace *all* social decisions to the very similar motive force which I call the social impulse. But this cannot be called instinctive except in a figurative way. Instinct is always something specific, due to the past life of the species, and derived from ancestors. Therefore the term is inapplicable to any social impulse. I confess, however, that it is difficult to avoid the use of the word to describe many of those combinations of perception, feeling, and impulse which operate in a society at certain crises. We may speak loosely of the instinct of self-preservation in the case of a society or group; and in the case of some social groups, such as a hive of bees, it is quite arguable that the appropriate behaviour in certain circumstances of

danger is really instinctive. In the case of human societies, I would rather say that the instincts of the individual members, complicated by all sorts of other individual and social elements, give rise to a social impulse towards a particular course of action. This impulse is usually mistaken for something reasonable: or rather, the mistake is made of thinking that the decision might and should be reasonable—especially by those people who think that a society ought to be guided by the reason of its “wise” or educated members, instead of by the instinctive *ὄρμη* of all its real citizens. If I could help to dispel this fallacy by using the word “instinctive,” I would gladly do so. But I hope the term “impulsive” will serve the same purpose, while undoubtedly being more accurate.

I would, however, protest against the extravagant extension of the “instinct-explanation of motives” which seems to be becoming popular. It may be true that, in all our individual actions from the cradle to the grave, the motive force is traceable to that inherited equipment of native impulses which is part of the essence of instinct. There is, no doubt, behind all our complex economic activities the push of the hunger-impulse, of the instinct of self-assertion, and of a few other primary instincts. Doubtless, also, all our ambitions and desires which prompt us to work for our own or others' good have their roots in the native impulses which belong to the instincts of our species. But to explain the motive force of the conduct of a thoughtful moral man by reference to these instincts is no more explanatory than is, let us say, the explanation of a

man's failures or mistakes by reference to original sin. Most of all does the explanation miss the point in the case of our actions in new situations under the influence of new conceptions of an end or ideal. And in the movements of social life, the situations and conceptions are usually new ; the motive which determines the particular course of action chosen is impulse modified and directed by new ideas ; and it is this constantly new modification of impulse which has to be explained. For example, our national action to-day in regard to a possible danger of war with some other power is motivated generally by the instinct of fear which is strong in all the members of our (and other) species. But, when that is admitted, we are really no nearer an explanation of the particular action which is taken by the nation or various groups or parties within it.

CHAPTER V

SOCIETY CONSIDERED AS SUBJECT TO THE LAWS OF MIND (*continued*)

IN the last chapter we have confined our attention to the conditions of mental preparedness for change in any society ; on the one hand, the negative conditions of readiness on the part of individuals and groups to revise and break up old and customary association-masses connected with any institution or practice ; and on the other hand, the positive condition of the existence within easy reach of thought-systems capable of taking the place of the masses of feeling and idea thus discarded. But a host of further questions at once present themselves. *How* do people become ready to revise their old beliefs ? What causes them to take it into their heads to be critical ? How comes it that new idea-systems arise within a society ? Who or what is responsible for them ? How do they become attractive enough to displace old ideas ? How do they spread ?

These queries raise two very different questions : one concerning the *process* by which change of idea or attitude or aim tends to occur among social beings ; the other concerning the *origin* of the idea or ideas

which determine the direction of change. The latter question must be put on one side for the present ; we are not yet in a position to answer it. But the former may be answered in part at least. It is a question of simple social psychology, or the science of the mental processes which go on in any human society. And the answer may be found by considering some of the influences which the life of the group brings to bear upon the individual's mind, and the counter-influences exercised by the ideas of other groups or of the individuals belonging to them.

Our normal growth in any society tends, during youth, to establish in us associations of feeling and idea by a process of unconscious imitation. Within the family the child is incessantly absorbing the customary views, beliefs, attitudes, standards, and methods belonging to the family. It is taking in and making its own the family inheritance—a mental inheritance, quite as important a thing as the physical inheritance which it acquires before birth. To the process by which it does this the term imitation is applied ; but this does not imply that the child is consciously imitating anything. The process is usually unconscious ; and it is the process which is paramount in our moral and social education during our youth certainly, and probably all through our life if any development is going on at all. In this process of education the family group is by far the most important. Every normal family has its own inheritance to give, and gives it naturally. But the process soon becomes something more than that of unconsciously absorbing

associations of feeling and idea, or imitating habits and ways of doing things or of thinking thoughts. It is also a process into which, as the children grow, conscious selection and criticism enter increasingly. And these elements are encouraged by the simple fact that the family has normally two parents, not one; for just as in physical heredity this duality is the chief condition of progress, so it is in mental heredity also. The child has, or ought to have, two parents to imitate, differing, of course, in their ways and thoughts. If each parent possesses equal prestige, the child will be led to compare and select from two sets of equally attractive examples, thus acquiring an inheritance which is never the same for two generations or even two individuals, but is peculiarly open to variations; and also learning the valuable habit of comparison and criticism.

It is easy to see that the dominance of one of the parents will act as a conservative force; and it is a fact that the dominance of the father as a sort of patriarch is always one of the great conditions of conservatism or fixity in a society. The equality or independence of the mother is a progressive factor, simply because it opens out two alternative sources of mental heredity instead of one, and also leads to constant comparison on the part of the children.

The same process of imitation, modified in varying degree by selection and criticism, continues to operate in the wider groups into which the children are thrown as their education proceeds. The least stimulating group is usually the one which is most homogeneous, or composed of persons of the same sex and class and age.

Such a group is not likely to predispose its members to comparison and criticism and other conditions of innovating thought. We are justified in regarding the monastic system of school education, as exemplified in the traditional British Public School, as a strong conservative force. The boy is brought into close contact with members of his own sex only, the vast majority of whom closely resemble him in class and caste tradition. This contact supplies the minimum of stimulus to his thought: there is little challenge offered to his critical faculties; and the admitted virtue of the system is that it makes strong an *esprit de corps* and a code of honour which are largely a caste-feeling and a class-code. The school group becomes less conservative in proportion as the members belong to different classes—as often in America, and in some of the most progressive countries in Europe, such as Norway and Sweden and Denmark. It is least conservative when both sexes are equally mixed in it. The co-educational system is necessarily more stimulating to new ideas, since difference of sex introduces innate differences of attitude and estimate. It is therefore more progressive, or dangerous (we may choose which word we prefer according to our bias), than the system of the separate education of the sexes. In Plato's ideal republic (if we regard it as a serious social ideal) by far the most dangerous element is the co-education of the sexes; for this would certainly lead to very unexpected changes of view and standard, unless checked by exceedingly strong tradition and custom, and the iron hand of repressive guardians.

Again, when we come to adult life, the tendency to innovation, to the formation of new social aims and impulses, is largely conditioned by the comparative homogeneity or heterogeneity of grouping. In all our big cities there is a fairly sharp separation between a West End and an East End, the rich quarter and the poor quarter. This is, of course, a natural result of the perfectly excusable distaste which most of us feel for many of the sights and sounds and smells associated with poverty and squalor. We prefer to live away from them, if we can. Social reformers sometimes upbraid us for doing so, and deplore the resulting separation of classes, with its accompanying lack of sympathy on the part of the rich with the sufferings of the poor, and their ignorance of the way in which "the other half" lives. But there is another result which is usually unnoticed or unconfessed. The separation is quite an important factor in the production of what some people will call social stability, others social unprogressiveness; in other words, it is a very strong conservative influence. So far as the rich are concerned, it makes it possible for the idols of class to be kept free from much criticism on the part of the members of the class concerned. Disquieting thoughts are not suggested by their environment to most of the comfortable denizens of Mayfair; whereas constant contact with Poplar and West Ham would certainly inspire quite a number of well-to-do people with rather revolutionary views.*

* I hope I shall not be blamed for considering only what the richer classes gain and lose from the separation. I am heretical enough to doubt whether it would be any gain at all to the poorer

So, too, the infusion of a small proportion of labour members into the national Parliament is an event of importance rather on account of its indirect effects than because of any startling influence upon legislation. The mere presence of a group of members of a different class, carrying with it a constant suggestion of different views, will tend to alter and complicate the thought-systems of all other members.

We may safely assert, then, that the process by which social change takes place is closely connected with the two opposite processes of imitation and criticism of ideas ; imitation predominating undisturbed as a conserving influence in proportion as the group is homogeneous ; critical selection predominating as an innovating factor in proportion as the group is heterogeneous, or as close contact with other groups increases.

But the process which prepares the way for change is really much more complex than this. It is possible for numerous new ideas to be presented to some or many members of a group without producing any positive effect. They are not absorbed ; nobody takes them up or imitates them ; they remain inoperative, or

classes of East London, for example, if the more comfortable West-Enders settled among them in any numbers. We, who are better off, are seldom capable of doing more good than harm to the poor by our examples—the only form of influence which counts for much in the matter ; while the poor gain enormously in strength and virtue by the fact that their grouping *is*, on the whole, homogeneous. It is a gain of stability for them, without a doubt, and not a loss of “progressiveness.” Witness the significant fact that the mixed patches of poverty in the midst of the West End are really inferior in morale to the general level of the East End.

even give rise to conscious antagonism. On the other hand, it may happen that a new idea becomes unexpectedly powerful; thousands of people open their arms to it and make it their own; and it becomes the keynote of a new movement or a new policy. How is this difference to be explained?

The success of a new idea depends upon one or both of two conditions: either it must be reasonable, or else it must come to us armed with considerable prestige. To the word "reasonable" here (as always when applied to social suggestions), a rather peculiar meaning must be given. It does not imply that the idea or suggestion is a really wise one, but merely that it seems to us to be good in relation to some actual or imagined need. In this sense the suggestion of food seems reasonable to me when I feel hungry. Yet it may often happen that my "hunger" is only false hunger due to indigestion, and the suggestion of food is quite *unreasonable*. What I really need is something very different. So with all suggestions of social change. We are never in a position to say that they are really wise or good. We cannot, for example (apart from blinding partisanship), assert that Tariff Reform is a wiser or truer suggestion than Free Trade, or more reasonable in relation to truth or to the actual needs of the nation, any more than we can assert that the leaders of one party or the exponents of one policy are really wiser or more reasonable than those of the other. But each policy is accepted as eminently reasonable by its own advocates, just in the sense that it seems to them best calculated to meet a need which they believe exists in this or that form.

And any proposal or new idea tends to be powerful in proportion as it seems likely to meet a need which many people feel, or think they feel. It then commends itself to them as "reasonable."

The other great factor which makes an idea successful is the prestige with which it comes to us. This is tantamount to saying that it must come from an acceptable source, backed by the authority of people whom we respect. Unless this condition is fulfilled, the difficulties in the way of the spread of any idea are enormously increased, however reasonable it may be in itself. This is, of course, obvious; but the underlying cause is not so obvious. The difficulty is almost entirely due to the natural inertia of established ideas in any social group, this in turn depending upon the homogeneity of the group, and the conservative influence which every homogeneous group brings to bear upon all its members by reason of the astounding control it exercises over their minds. This control is strong in proportion as the consciousness of homogeneity is strong. When the members of a group not only think very much alike, but *know* that they do so, and know also that they think rather differently from people outside their group, then every established idea in the minds of each of them acquires a natural prestige due to the simple fact that all the other members hold it; and the whole mass of the ideas of the group forms a solid barrier against the intrusion of anything new. No alien idea has a chance of winning its way in unless it is backed by a prestige even greater than that of the group. Schoolmasters are familiar with the difficulty of

inducing boys to change their ideas for the better ; no amount of preaching will give a new moral idea currency among them, unless (as very seldom happens among boys) the master possesses a prestige greater than that of the boys who set the tone. So, too, in some "sporting" sets among men ; the ideas which the group has accepted and made its own have a cogency far exceeding that of the ideas embodied in the generally accepted social morality ; there have been "sportsmen" who would rather die than shoot a bird sitting, yet would commit adultery without any scruple at all. Or, to take a rather higher example, a group of college dons, meeting evening after evening in the same common-room, and discussing the affairs of the universe with the refined moderation which often becomes habitual among scholarly people who are a little withdrawn from the world, tends to grow proof against any ideas which seem in the least revolutionary. It is not that the group forms a kind of mutual admiration society—that is not necessary ; but merely that the members, resembling each other in certain marked characteristics, grow into a sameness of attitude based more upon custom than anything else ; and any other attitude jars upon them as savouring of offence against the customary and accepted canons of good form.

Here the influence of homogeneity operates in the direction of giving great prestige to the accepted ideas of the group. Quite naturally, of course ; for who can be more entitled to respect than the people who most closely agree with and resemble ourselves ? And the result is that society comes to be filled with barriers

which offer a strong resistance to the invasion of new ideas, unless these come with great prestige, or else happen to suggest a way of meeting a new need for which the accepted ideas of the group furnish no remedy.

The opposition to the entrance of a new idea is of course strengthened in all cases by the self-interest of the groups and their members. This is worth noting merely in order to notice the further fact that such self-interest is not necessarily at all enlightened. It forms often as blind a barrier as the mass of accepted or inherited ideas referred to above ; it is never reasonable in the true sense, though often shrewd enough to be really protective, exactly as masses of blind prejudice are often a very useful and salutary form of protective armour. Its chief characteristic is that it is instinctive, and works instinctively ; and this is the outstanding fact in connexion with all social changes or reforms. The opposition to the suggestion of change is due throughout to feelings connected with various forms of a general instinct of self-preservation ; the attractiveness of an idea also depends upon its relation to instincts or impulses on the part of the social members who are the determining factors of change. We think, argue, or reason about the suggested idea ; we accept it or reject it after due consideration ; we even "prove" its truth or falsity, so we imagine. But all the while the vital impulses within us and within our group or society are quietly deciding the question for us, without waiting for any process of logical proof, sometimes even without any show of real reasoning. This superiority of the

vital impulse to any logical proof is most obviously illustrated by what older people are inclined to call the perversity of young enthusiasts. "I have proved to her that socialism is false," says a mother in reference to her daughter in one of Mr. Shaw's plays. "Ah, my dear madam," replies her friend, "it is just by proving that that I have lost all my young disciples." But the perversity is not peculiar to youth or enthusiasm. It is at least as strong in the old or middle-aged. The only difference is that the young do not trouble to wait for or respect any proof, while older people have the greatest respect for their own proofs and their "logical" conclusions, and are only perverse in reference to any one else's.

One very important point must be explained. Change or progress or reform in any "progressive" age depends upon another fact totally different from those already noticed. Given a new idea, endowed with some kind of prestige, and recognized as "reasonable" or fitted to meet a felt need, even so, with all these conditions fulfilled, change would still be a far slower process than it is, were it not for the fact that many new ideas exercise a kind of hypnotic influence upon their originators and upon many of their followers. The originators not only fall in love with the idea, but often become possessed by it. It becomes for them the infallible key to many closed locks; they can see no defects in it, but only amazing powers for good.*

* How far this hypnotic influence of an idea over its originators or other people is due to constant repetition of the idea in some form or other, we need not here consider. But it must be

And this hypnotic influence spreads to their followers, especially to the younger and more energetic among them ; for it is a natural attribute of any ingenious new idea that it can attract and appeal to the young and energetic with far greater force than any old-established idea can, though the latter may be far better and saner, and have far more "stuff" in it, to say nothing of having stood the test of time as a proof of its validity. In this way the new idea, whether a new policy or a new creed, is exalted into a reforming faith, with energy behind it ; and it is likely to displace the old ideas rapidly, provided only it proves that it possesses *some* reasonableness.

But this tendency must not be exaggerated. It does not mean that, in a changeable age, any plausible idea will probably drive out better ideas which happen to be established. By saying that the new idea must first be proved reasonable, we imply two things : first that it must be (as explained above) really fitted to meet a need ; secondly, that this need is pressing, and is not adequately met by the old ideas. Even young and energetic and rebellious people are not often so foolish as to rush after any change just because it is change. None of us become zealous reformers just for the sake of taking up a new cause. When we do so, it is

remembered that repetition of a suggestion is one of the most important causes of its "success." The commercial value of advertising rests chiefly upon this fact. Only tell people often enough that they *want* something of which they have never previously heard, and they will end by "wanting" it quite badly, and perhaps thereafter be unable to get on at all without it.

a sure sign that we are dissatisfied with the way in which the new needs of which we are conscious are being met by the existing scheme of thought and action ; in other words, the very appearance of a band of ardent reformers is good evidence of the failure of the established ideas to do their work properly. And if this failure is felt strongly only by the young, we cannot therefore conclude that the failure is more imaginary than real. Possibly the need which has to be met is young also ; the older generation may not be fully conscious of it, and therefore is unable to perceive the failure which is so keenly felt by the younger generation.

Have we still kept the reformer in our company ? Or has he long ago turned away in disgust ? If he has not been wearied with the abstract nature of the discussion, I fear he may have been offended by the tone of the "superior and cultured person" which has crept into it. But this has been inevitable ; for many of those who are most busily urging reforms of our old institutions and ways of life *are* superior to the mass of their fellow-citizens—not in their moral worth, perhaps, but in the fact that they have reached a much higher level of thought and conscious purpose than is common in their society. And of this superiority they need to be reminded very frequently, lest they forget altogether the "difficulties of adaptation," which, presenting little difficulty to them, form insuperable obstacles in the way of quick reform of the masses who are in a different stage of mental development.

But I will try to catch again the attention of the

practical reformer by giving some definite applications of the principles outlined in this and the preceding chapter.

First, it is obvious that, whatever we may be doing as reformers, our chief contribution to progress is made through our influence as *minds*. Whether we are trying to re-house a slum population, or to devise a better way of filling the stomachs of the children, or to lessen the number of public-houses, or to teach people to be more thrifty or sober—in all these efforts, however much some of them seem to aim merely at a re-arrangement of an external environment, what we are really doing is the same. We are bringing our systems of thought and purpose to others, and calling upon them to leave their own “habitual” ones, and enter those we offer in exchange. For it is not the external re-adjustment of means to ends by improved building or machinery or conditions, which is the true reform ; but the internal re-adjustment of thoughts and purposes involved in every reform. Just as in every institution, relationship, or method of action, it is not the structure and organization which matter so much, but always the meaning and purpose underlying these ; so in every reform, it is not the improved structure or mechanism which is of most importance, but the improvement of the underlying scheme of thoughts and motives. And of all this, the application is two-fold. First, we are always working in relation to the mental content of the people, both individuals and groups. Do we know that content? Do we realize the operative systems into which our suggestions or schemes are to be received? The comparative failure of much reforming effort seems to show

that we do not. Just as many missions to "heathen," both at home and abroad, meet with little success because the missionaries have not really entered into the mind-life of those "heathen," so also much of the energy with which we try to "improve" the poorer classes is wasted because we do not understand the mind-systems of the people who belong to a different group and live in a different atmosphere from our own. I am afraid it has to be said, at the risk of great offence, that only a very few of the army of "social workers" in every city have any idea how the poor among whom they work are interpreting their environment; what the conditions of their life mean to them; what are the receptive systems into which the suggestions from the environment or the suggestions of change are absorbed, and in which they produce their effects; what are the feelings by which they are chiefly motivated; what is the strength of the standards current among them. More often than not we under-estimate the quality of the mental systems of the poor, insulting them with treatment suited only for children or savages; occasionally we over-estimate them and expect them to respond to suggestions which, to them, are really meaningless.

Equally important, and much less obvious, is the necessity of relating *our* schemes or suggestions of reform to the general scheme of the social life of our day. Once more, neglect of this necessity leads to waste of effort. Some of us hug old schemes, resting in antiquated tradition or custom, and try to apply them to the new life of to-day, little modified by the new thoughts and purposes of our time. We become

backwater reformers or retrograde progressives ; we fail to see, for instance, that it is as senseless to cling to an old scheme of turning all the respectable daughters of the poor into domestic servants, in a world in which the ideas of work and service have partly outgrown the feudal age, as it is to attempt to apprentice every intelligent boy to a skilled trade, in a world in which the conditions of industry have outgrown the apprenticeship system, and superseded the old distinction between skilled and unskilled work.

In our "charities" most of all do we fail to recognize the change of life-scheme and attitude which often is, and always ought to be, operative among the members of every section of our industrial community. For nearly a century past we have in England striven to found our social and industrial life upon a basis of conscious independence, laying the duty of full self-support and family-support upon every normal citizen, and so attempting to abolish the necessity for any patronage of the poor by the rich, or indeed of any gifts or bounties or charities of the old kind—except in cases of exceptional and unforeseen distress. This underlying theory of a society of independent citizens has not yet been fully realized in fact ; but the important point to note is that the ideas belonging to it have been far more completely assimilated by the better grades of working men than by the richer classes. The former have learned to detest patronage : it offends their newly developed sense of independence. The latter are still fond of it : it gratifies their natural sense of superiority, as well as their elementary sentiment of pity. Even

among the very poor many have learned to say to the rich, "Curse your charity!"—though the cry may not always be taken as an index to a very real spirit of independence. But very few of the rich have yet learned to be ashamed of the charity thus execrated, or to substitute for the old-time duty of gifts and doles the far harder duties which the complexities of modern life really impose upon the more fortunate classes. The result is a continual clashing of aims, a continual frustrating of good-will. The poor are called ungrateful: there never was a worse libel. The rich are called much harder names: and some of these are also undeserved. It would be a matter for grave uneasiness if the poor showed much gratitude for many of the proffered forms of help which still are popular. Why should any of us be grateful for what is thoroughly bad for us? It is not a matter for any uneasiness that the rich—and those who act as their charitable proxies—are so often disappointed, or that their schemes and devices do not produce the well-being and contentment hoped for. We do not want our workers to remain in the quasi-serfdom of a past age; we want them to be free to manage their own lives and meet their own difficulties in their own ways, without any meddling from above. If we must meddle, just because our attitude is antiquated, then it is not a calamity that the meddling is often a failure. And if we want to help the people in reality, then it is not beyond our power to take a harder and longer road to social service than that of charitable short-cuts to this or that partial remedy.

A more practical moral may be drawn from the later sections of this chapter. We may leave the reader to moralize for himself or herself over the very obvious applications of the principles of suggestion and imitation. But for any would-be reformer or more humble social worker there is one point which needs emphasizing. If in our attempts to help the poor we want the new ideas we bring to have force and to prevail, then it is clear that we cannot afford to discard any handles of prestige within our reach. These handles are of two kinds—within us and without. The external ones are the least important, and they are not always within our control. We cannot easily make ourselves more attractive, or imposing than we are ; we cannot endow ourselves with the external attributes of beings from a loftier sphere ; and indeed we may be content to leave that particular kind of prestige to be exercised by the occasional visitants who appear in a poor neighbourhood at election times. Nevertheless, the district visitor who dresses with unnecessary dowdiness is very foolish : she sacrifices a source of prestige which may be childish but is undeniably real. And the man who becomes slovenly because it does not matter what he looks like in a slum is also foolish : what he says and does loses something in consequence of the neglect.

But there is an internal source of prestige or of power which is within the reach of every one ; and that is the power which comes from confidence, not in oneself only but in others. That faith begets faith is a commonplace ; yet there are some workers who not only fail to believe in themselves—a pardonable mistake—but fail

also to believe in the people with whom they are dealing—a quite unpardonable defect. For we all tend to act up or down to the [standard which is confidently expected of us ; it is therefore hardly possible to have too much faith in the potential goodness of any one. Moreover, the people deserve this faith. Experience usually leads to the conviction that it is impossible to expect too much of them ; the standard can never be pitched too high either for their capacity to act or their ability to understand. And their respect for us is often proportionate to our faith in them and to our expectation of them. It is not an exaggeration to say that a considerable increase of faith in the actual and possible goodness of the least promising people would be a surer step towards radical social reform than the carrying out of any programme at present put forward.

There is one other matter to which attention must be directed here. In an earlier paragraph I asserted that change of a social habit might be made in two ways—by force, or by enlightenment. Of these alternatives, I have considered only the latter ; and there is a temptation to dismiss the former as hardly worthy of notice. Of course, any section of society can be dragooned into better ways ; but that is not what we mean by progress. It is like trying to make people virtuous by Act of Parliament—a proceeding which each political party, when in opposition, assures us is quite futile. But unfortunately the matter is not at all so simple. A large amount of real social progress is brought about by what may be much more accurately described as force-change than as change of heart. In every society,

about two-thirds of the members are continually being pushed or pulled along by the remaining one-third ; the latter do not stop to convert the former, or to educate them into wider thought-systems, but just insist upon what they think best, and leave the others to adjust themselves to it as best they can. And the method is anything but futile, for this reason. Compulsory modifications of habit, induced by changes of opportunity or stimulus offered by the environment, do undoubtedly (if not very much resented), bring about gradual modifications of taste or desire or purpose among the majority of the people concerned, and so lead them on to new ranges of motive. Nor is it merely a kind of habitual virtuousness which may thus result from Acts of Parliament or acts of a determined minority of reformers. The reform insisted upon has implicit within it new purpose and aim, and is connected with a scheme of life which (as planned and conceived by the reformers) is not habitual at all. These elements are gradually transferred to the mass of people who live under the influence of the reform, and tend to become part of their mental and moral equipment, so introducing them to some sort of new and real scheme of purposes in place of the habits of action and thought which have been compulsorily checked. We may say, if we like, that this is not the best kind of virtue. We would prefer dirty people to become cleaner by learning to hate dirt, not by being drilled and harried into cleaner ways, and then gradually coming to like them. We would prefer intemperate people to become sober by voluntary self-restraint, not by being shut out of saloons and bars—

exactly as we would prefer our own moral progress to come about by a continual rising of the good will and pure heart within us, and not (as is more common) by the succession of shocks and warnings and compulsions of environment which so oddly educate our wills. But the ways of progress are not all of the strait and narrow kind : even the broad road of compulsion does lead upward for the majority of people. And the reformer who makes it his short-cut to a social goal is not therefore to be put out of court. He too may be furthering, even when he seems to neglect, that process of mental adaptation upon the necessity of which I have insisted. But we will consider the conditions of his success when we have discussed more fully the relation of the individual will to the external environment and to the social atmosphere.

CHAPTER VI

SOCIETY CONSIDERED AS AN ETHICAL STRUCTURE: A UNITY DEPENDENT UPON PURPOSE

WE are now prepared to consider society as an organic whole, of which every cell is a mind (as well as a body), every organ a mental system, and the whole structure a scheme of thoughts and purposes. In this way we express part of what we mean when we say that human society has a higher life than an animal society such as a hive of bees or a colony of ants. But only part; for probably bees and ants have minds, and it is difficult to believe that the structure of their societies and the organization of their social activities are not the expression of thought and purpose. Indeed it may very plausibly be urged that their minds, considered as social units, are far more perfect than ours, just as the scheme of thought and purpose underlying their social organization is far more harmonious. Every feeling and idea by which the bee's social activities are motivated appear to be in complete harmony with the mental system of the whole society; and this mental system must be very perfectly harmonized with the

purposes and ends for which the whole social life exists. Either our human social life is of a lower order, with all its disharmonies and cross-purposes and most imperfect relation of individual minds to the general system ; or else it belongs to a totally different order, which hardly admits of comparison. Or we may say that it is both : as a social life, designed to serve a limited, natural end, it is immeasurably inferior to the social life of bees or ants or wasps ; but as a social life designed to serve different ends from those of the bees or ants or wasps, it belongs to a different world altogether. By making clear this difference we shall bring out more clearly the real significance of our human social life.

In a previous chapter we noted the very obvious fact that, in everything organic, organs and structure are what they are because of their function. Applied to the mental side of organic society, we translate the same fact into the statement that the thought-systems underlying any organization of activities and relationships are what they are because of their *purpose*. Now a bee-hive, like every natural organism, exists for a purpose or purposes not really its own, but given and determined by nature. And this is true of every part of it. In the bee-hive, for example, the working bees and the drones and the queen-bee are what they are and do what they do in subordination to the purpose or aim of the whole, which is settled for them by nature. Up to a certain point, this is true also of us and our society—especially of some of our workers and many of our drones. They might almost as well be functionaries in

a bee-hive : they would then probably be better workers and better drones. But it is only a small part of the truth. And the reason why our society, as a society, is so shockingly inferior to a society of bees, or any animal society, is just that it is *not* all subordinated to nature's purpose, but has a purpose of its own ; and all its members have purposes of their own too. The significance of our society, the significance of every part and every function and every activity, the social significance of every member, lies in its relation to this purpose or these purposes. The significance of the bees' society and of their individual activities is fixed and simple, since all are related to the nature-given purpose ; the significance of our society and our activities is extraordinarily complicated, since they are related to our own complex and shifting purposes.

Again, closely connected with this difference of purpose, there is a difference in the kind of *unity* of a human society. We try to think of our society as one : so it is. But it possesses much less unity than a living body, and much less also than a good insect society. The latter has its unity supplied to it by nature : it forms a changing unity, of course—as does every living thing ; but it *is* a unity, despite the continual adjustments to a changing environment. But in our life, social as well as individual, a different kind of unity appears—an ideal unity—which means that our life is made one by our thought-out scheme or plan, by which all the elements are connected and held together, in spite of constant adjustments to changing purposes. This may best be illustrated from the individual life.

There is, first, the natural unity of the physical, organic body. There is, next, a very imperfect unity of feelings and experiences, made one by memory and anticipation. There is, thirdly, a still more imperfect unity of purposes, by which some parts of our lives and actions are ordered and harmonized. And, finally, there would be, in a perfect individual, the complete unity of a life in which all thoughts and actions would be ordered in relation to a single plan and aim—a plan in which everything connected with us would have its place, and would draw its significance from its place; and this plan would be a fully worked-out system of thinkings and doings, all related to a single end.

This is perhaps a difficult conception. But it is important to remember that human society (like every conscious individual) is really struggling towards such a unity, or unified system of its life; and it is necessary to conceive of our imperfect present society as a partial unity of this kind.

For the present, however, we will be content to dwell upon the idea of *purpose* as determining the significance of society and its parts and functions—only remembering that society is a kind of unity in consequence of the system into which all its purposes are worked, and by which they are all connected. For it is this idea of purpose or aim which gives the meaning to the word *ethical*, as we shall use it. We want to explain society and its parts and activities as expressions of purpose, and therefore forming an ethical structure in which we all have our place. We want to discover the ethical significance of the relationships in which we find ourselves,

of the institutions with which we are connected, and of the social activities in which we are engaged. In other words, we want to make clear to ourselves the true aims for the attainment of which our complicated social structure and organization exist. Only thus can we estimate the *value* of any institution, since its social (and therefore also moral) value depends wholly upon the relation of its special aim or purpose to the scheme of aims and purposes which the whole social structure expresses or is meant to express.

We must guard here against the inclination to consider our social life as *too consciously* purposive. No society, and no social individual, ever is or ever will be conscious of all the aims which give significance and value to the social structure. We speak of society as becoming increasingly *purposive*, and quite correctly; but its various organs still embody, and will always embody, numerous elements of purpose which are not in any sense the creation of its own choice and will; are not, in fact, *its* purpose at all. Just as the structure of any individual's body and mind (even the philosopher's) has most of its growth determined by nature's purposes, of which the individual is largely unconscious, so too the structure of the social body and mind. Nature's purposes, and the resulting structure, form the foundation upon which, as we become consciously purposive, we build our modifications of structure. And by the term "nature's purposes" we mean no more than those directions of development which are dictated by the demands of a changing environment working upon a group of undefined, and mostly unknown, potentialities.

So that when we speak of any structure or organ, social or individual, being what it is because of its purpose or aim, we do not mean its conscious purpose or aim, but only—at best—a group of purposes some of which are known and consciously chosen by us, some of which are known but not consciously chosen, and most of which are neither known nor chosen. And it does not matter what our conception of nature is in this connexion. We may, if we like, identify nature with God. In the old Hindu philosophy it is often said that all structure is determined by desire. The desire to see has created the eye; the desire to hear has brought ears into existence. This theory, of course, involves the assumption that all evolution is a process by which the universal intelligence gradually wakes itself up to a realization of its various powers, and unfolds the channels of its possible experience. This is only another way of saying that all nature's purposes are God's purposes. But it still remains true that His ways are hidden from us; and that therefore the distinction between the unknown evolutionary purposes and our conscious aims, either as individual agents or as social persons, has to be maintained.

Now, if we take any old institution, we find that it appears to have passed through different stages marked by different kinds of purpose. The oldest institution we know—the family—affords the most interesting illustration. In its earliest stage, the family appears as a group of persons, related to one another in certain ways, for the creation and preservation of the new and young life; in a word, its purpose is to carry on the life of the

human species. This we may call the stage of the natural family, resting always on nature's "practical syllogism" of father, mother, and child. So far it resembles closely the family among monkeys, wolves, or cattle—with all of whom humanity has much in common. But the human family soon appears as an institution with a rather more complex purpose—as a group related together in certain ways for the development and preservation of certain *feelings*. And this purpose may be said to be of two kinds: the social purpose of the development of feelings necessary to social life, such as affection and friendliness, or what the Romans called "consuetudo"; and the individual purpose of the development of feelings very valuable to the individual, of which the highest form is love. These purposes are not consciously present to the members of the family in this stage; but they characterize the stage as the unconscious purposes which have been added to the natural purpose of carrying on the life of the species. At a later stage, we see that the family very definitely serves yet other purposes. It appears as a group related together in certain ways for the development of certain combinations of feeling and idea, and for the realization of certain social aims. It serves the purpose of teaching respect for authority and order; of inculcating habits of co-operation; of educating the young in the virtues which are required of them as adult citizens. The highest form which the family reaches in this stage is the patriarchal family, performing innumerable social services because the family *is* society. At a later stage still, we find that some of these prior purposes seem to

pass into the background, and the family appears as a group related together in certain ways for the conscious realization of feelings and thoughts and modes of activity of the best kind—a group now with a conscious ideal before it, to which everything is subordinate; a group in which every member has his or her place and accepts it willingly, recognizing his duties and recognizing the rights of the others; in which, moreover, the chief motive is never necessity or fear at all, or even affection or love only, but devotion to the common end—the good of all. And to this we give the name of the *ethical* family. It is the highest form of the family—or of any other institution; it is very certainly a form which is seldom realized yet. And its distinguishing marks are: conscious recognition of an accepted aim or ideal; harmonious systems of relationships and activities, all the members being related to one another and acting in accordance with the requirements of the common aim; complete agreement as to place and duties; and unselfishness of motive, in the sense that the desires of each self include the known wants of all the others.

We are, most of us, very far from the true ethical family at present. And yet it is the stage which we are trying to reach; it represents the basis on which we wish to rest the family; no other basis will satisfy us. The other, the earlier and simpler, bases, are not and never will be superseded or left behind in the sense of having been dropped out; they are still there, but they are not the bases which we wish to emphasize, or wish to have uppermost in our thoughts in the formation of a

family or in the defence of the family as an institution. All the earlier purposes persist ; but in the ethical stage they will be taken for granted, and the gist of the meaning of the family will lie in the newer elements of conscious purpose and will and agreement which the name *ethical* is intended to imply.

Of all our social institutions a rather similar account might be given, though perhaps we are even further from the ethical stage in regard to most of them. But it is, nevertheless, true that we are at least trying now to realize the ethical basis and to make all our institutions ethical, instead of compulsory or natural or habitual. And it is clear that what will now interest us most is not the form or the structure of the institutions—their natural history, as it were—but always the spirit and idea connected with them. These are now the important things about any institution, and the secret of its significant changes. For in this stage, too, every institution is incessantly changing, though its natural structure may seem to remain the same; and the essence of its change lies in two factors: on the one hand, its own changing purpose; on the other, its relation to the purposes of all other institutions, and to those of society as a whole. In a purely natural society, such as a hive of bees, no such change as this takes place, though change is always going on. But the process is automatic, and in response solely to changing pressures of environment, and changing vital processes on the part of the units or cells. In a human society which has reached, or rather is trying to reach, the level we are now considering, change is of a different kind,

conditioned by elements of feeling, idea, and will, by which alone the ethical stage is made possible.

The significance of the form of change now under consideration appears when we turn to existing institutions. In the case of every one, it is a change of purpose and of relation to other purposes which we have in mind when we contemplate any reform. As a piece of social structure, or as an organ of society, or as a mode of control of our activities, or as a definition and limitation of our relationships, the institutions may usually be left alone. We do not want to abolish them just because they are clumsy pieces of structure which get in our way, or because they limit our free activities; we only want to alter their aim and tendency, because these conflict with the scheme of aims and tendencies which we are striving to realize. No one but an anarchist really wants to abolish private property* or the family or the penal system or the Government or the policeman. It is noteworthy that few people, even among ardent reformers, care very much about the abolition of the monarchy or the Church or even the House of Lords. But very many people are intensely interested in changing the purpose and aim of several of these institutions. An institution like property, for instance,

* Some Socialists and all Communists may take exception to this statement. But their aim, so far as it is thought out at all, is really to change the institution or abolish it *in its present form*. An ordered society, of the kind to which we are accustomed, could not exist without the institution of private property in the sense of an established and accepted regulation of the limits of *meum* and *uum*.

has passed through the usual sequence of functions, ranging from the necessary, nature-given purpose of making possible some kind of social order and progress, to a partly conscious combination of purposes, in which self-aggrandizement and satisfaction of selfish desires are mingled with the known needs of industry and the felt requirements of individual self-development. Many of us would like to purify this combination of purposes, and make it more consistent with a worthy social ideal. In the same way, the institution of punishment has passed through the successive stages of merely natural vindictiveness, then a half-conscious stage of retribution-purpose and deterrent aim, and finally to a stage in which the fully conscious desire to reform the wrongdoer begins to overshadow the other purposes. And again, many of us would like to see much more of this latter purpose read into the institution in harmony with the more reasonable and more hopeful ideal which we have set before us. Similarly again, I suppose there is no thinking citizen who would not like to see every army changed finally from an organ for making war into an organ for keeping peace, and every Government changed from a body which legislates partly for sectional interests into a body which legislates solely for the interests of all. And the same fact, of course, holds good, even more obviously, in regard to newer and more simply purposive institutions. We do not (most of us) want to abolish a Poor-Law system or a hospital system or a society for repressing mendicity and organizing charitable relief; but we may be very eager to change the purpose and tendency and methods of

each in relation to the general aims of society. As at present interpreted, each of these may be thought to conflict with some element in the social health, or some quality in the social character which we would like to see realized—with the true self-respect and dignity of the poor, for example, or the true sympathy and self-denial of the rich.

But it is necessary here to make a distinction, and also to emphasize a fact which is often lost sight of. Most of our older institutions have a natural origin in the necessities of life or of social life, and an unconscious growth following that origin, with a gradual and ever-increasing infusion of partly conscious purpose. But, however nearly they may approach to the ethical stage, they never lose their natural basis, and seldom lose the accretions of other purposes which have been added in the process of their growth. The most perfect ethical family will still keep among its purposes the nature-given end of the continuation of the species; the most perfect and considerate government will still have its roots fixed in the primal necessity of preserving social order; the most tenderly reformatory punishment system will not shed all traces of its origin in the animal instinct to defend oneself against aggression; the most perfectly socialized institution of property will still be connected with the original necessities of an elementary social progress. None of the elements of function and purpose are ever quite lost, though some of them may be forgotten by us when we think of the institutions and of what they mean to us. And this fact has a very important consequence. Different

members of any society, and the same members at different times, are chiefly conscious of different elements of purpose in connexion with every institution. For instance, what I mean by the family, when I think or argue about it, is quite different from what my neighbour means ; each of us concentrates attention upon some two or three of the numerous purposes embodied in the institution, to the exclusion probably of the rest ; and the purposes which we unconsciously over-emphasize are not likely to be the same, unless we happen to be very much alike both in our mental and moral and social development, and in the circumstances of our lives. Similarly, each one of us means different things by the family at different times in our lives. In my youth, the family meant to me chiefly a system of controls, most of which I resented ; only at a later stage did I realize at all that the family also stands for much better and deeper purposes. And, further, both our selection of the purposes upon which our attention is fixed, and our estimates of those purposes, are determined by very complex and changing conditions of experience and feeling and bias which are never the same in any two individuals. This is the secret of the appalling confusion which invariably results whenever people begin to argue about any old institution such as the family or property. It is impossible for them not to mean very different things—and to jump from one meaning to another, without knowing it—in every discussion. The bearing of this upon the processes of social change will become obvious at a later stage.

But all institutions are not old, and the newer ones

are less complex, and carry their purposes on their faces, as it were, since they have come into being quite definitely in order to serve a particular purpose, or in conscious subordination to some general purpose of society. They have thus no natural basis, in the ordinary sense. There *is* something natural about a City Corporation or a House of Lords ; but not about a Censor of Plays or a Stock Exchange. And yet these also have their accretions of purposes and meanings—the older ones seldom shed, the newer ones not always proclaimed. The Censor of Plays, for example, is an institution designed to protect public morality from the dangers of indecent plays. Many people would now affirm that it exists solely for the purpose of suppressing a few playwrights whose plays happen to have more than the usual strength and meaning, expressed with more than the usual vividness and vigour. Yet it must not be supposed that all recently formed institutions rest throughout upon conscious, designed purposes. Many of them rest upon no basis of conscious purpose at all, but have just grown up naturally as the easiest mode of response to new needs. The modern wage-system is an example of this. Some established method of rewarding labourers was needed when slavery and serfdom had disappeared ; and the wage-system grew up to meet the need. The consequence is that it now rests upon a very confused and obscure collection of purposes which have never been disentangled. Among these there are still to be found the purpose of keeping the labourer alive and just able to perpetuate his kind for the benefit of future industry,

side by side with the purpose of distributing wealth equitably among its producers. But the purposes conflict, and have never been harmonized; and the result is that, as we become more consciously purposive, we find that the institution cannot be made to fit the various purposes which we now insist upon. It cannot, for instance, be brought into harmony with the growing purpose of fairness to women—even in their capacity as workers; nor can it be harmonized with the growing demands for a population whose health and strength and intelligence shall reach a high standard. Hence the continual outcry against the institution in its present form; and one does not need to be a Socialist to perceive that very far-reaching changes are called for if it is to serve the various purposes which we are more and more reading into our conception of social welfare.

Another difficulty in the way of our understanding the true purposes of any institution lies in the fact that each of us is related to it in different ways. We may distinguish two chief divisions of the kinds of contact with institutions. First, there are differences of relationships based upon our actual membership or non-membership, and upon our direct or only indirect interest. These may be called differences of simple contact; and the effect of them hardly needs illustration. The family can never mean the same to a bachelor as to a family man; women's franchise cannot have the same significance to a man as to a woman. So, too, the law and the penal system have one aspect for the thief or the prisoner, but quite another for the ordinary law-abiding citizen; and a charitable society

has one set of purposes in the eyes of applicants for relief, but a different set in the eyes of the managers. And in the second place, there are differences of another kind, dependent upon the relation of the purposes of the institution (as conceived by us) to *our* purposes, whatever these may be. These differences, which we may call differences of thought-contact, have also effects which are obvious but very important. More even than the differences of simple contact with institutions, they modify our conception of the whole meaning and quality of the institution considered. What could be more marked, for example, than the difference in the views of the Roman Church as seen by a Kensitite and by a very High Churchman? Or in the conception of a medical school, as viewed by a member of a research defence society and by an anti-vivisectionist? Or in the interpretation of private property as given by Mr. St. Loe Strachey on the one hand, and by Mr. Hyndman on the other? In each case, the sections or individuals do not see or think of the same thing at all; they are thinking of the relation of a set of purposes, which may or may not really belong to the institution, to another set of purposes, belonging to their own particular ideals, which may or may not be valuable or vital. Hence once more the extraordinary confusions which appear when we begin to argue about institutions. It very seldom happens that we can approach them from the same standpoint; and our arguments are concerned with different things covered by the same name.

I would note too that, as social life proceeds, these difficulties and complexities increase enormously. In

the first place, as institutions increase in number, and as our activities become more diverse, so, necessarily, individual differences of contact and relation multiply, until in a modern society these differences have become quite infinite; and in the second place, as we become more thoughtful, so we constantly read new purpose into all institutions, and at the same time increase the diversity of our own ideal schemes and purposes. The marvel, of course, is that we ever agree at all; and as a plain matter of fact, we never really do. But we reach a rough, working agreement by forgetting our differences—a process in which we are aided by the devices of political party, religious sect, or any similar grouping by which we are brought into a general agreement with a number of other people. And the power of forgetting differences comfortably is the qualification of a useful, practical citizen, who makes a good party politician, a good Churchman, or what not; while the power of remembering *some* differences very tenaciously is the qualification of an effective social reformer or innovator, who is very seldom a good follower of any party, but must needs be a founder or leader of a party of his own.

These considerations, however, bear upon a question which we have not yet reached, I mean the question of the process by which purposive change of institutions takes place. We must therefore pass on to notice one other set of facts about any institutions considered separately. We have seen that each is an embodiment of purposes or accretions of purposes which appear to be more or less distinct from one another; and in most institutions, certainly in the older ones, the various accretions

of purposes have been, as it were, put on in layers, the top layers being always more closely related to our present conscious aims than the deeper layers. Now in a reasonable society we should, I suppose, approach each institution reasonably, and attach ourselves to it for the sake of the conscious purposes which harmonized best with our present life. But, actually, we find that different people enter into and belong to this or that institution at very different levels, becoming attached to different layers of purpose. Thus in our analysis of the family, we see that four obvious layers may be distinguished, to the purposes of which we may perhaps give the names of nature-need fulfilment, feeling-need fulfilment, social-need fulfilment, and finally, the higher individual-need fulfilment. So in the case of property, we find layers of purpose, among which we distinguished sheer social necessity at the bottom, then the need of progressive satisfactions of all sorts—mostly selfish ones,—then the desire to make possible fuller individual activities; and finally a desire to promote the opportunities of all. Now it is obviously true that many people are related to such institutions only in the lower layers of purpose. Just as very few people have yet reached the ethical stage of the family, so very few people have got beyond the second or third layer of the purposes of property; and as, in regard to these lower layers of purpose, the institution has become the habitual mode of meeting the need, so we may say that many people are only attached to the institution by habit. In this fact lies the partial justification for the assertion that, in a Christian country, most people are

Christians by habit; that most Conservatives and Liberals belong to a Conservative or Liberal party by habit, and that most people enter into and accept the family and the system of private property by habit. They accept the institutions—because they are the established habits of their society. We may go further than Professor James when he says, of our relation to beliefs, that most of us jump into them with both feet, and stand there. The process is even less thoughtful than this. In the case of institutions, at any rate, it is truer to say that most people awake to find themselves standing in them, and at once assume that this is their proper station. So no doubt it is, in a sense; for stability is the great condition of order, and, perhaps at all times, a pre-requisite of progress. But the consequences are often disconcerting and irritating. If you attempt to argue dispassionately about the Church or the family or property with any one who is only habitually attached to them, he will not defend them on the ground of their higher purposes or ideals. Possibly he will not defend them at all, but will only splutter with indignation at the thought that they should be attacked; for they are habits to him, quite accepted ways by which quite accepted ends are to be attained. The fact that he splutters makes argument difficult—which is of little consequence. But it also indicates the fact that the man is stuck in a really deep layer of ancient purpose, possibly a very solid and important layer, even if rather antiquated; and reasonable argument is not the process by which he is likely to be moved. Moreover, if no one were so stuck, if we could

all discuss institutions as reasonably as an Ibsen or a Nietzsche or a Bernard Shaw, we should suffer from the discomfort of almost daily revolutions, or at any rate, from a condition of social instability which would seriously impede our individual activities.

But we must pass on from the consideration of the complexity of the purposes crystallized in our institutions to examine the *unity* which we predicated of society and its life. By this assertion of unity we chiefly desire to indicate the fact that all institutions, all groupings, all relationships, and all the social activities of individuals, are subordinate to the general aims and purposes of society; and that therefore social life is to be regarded as the Great Institution to whose purposes all particular purposes are relative.

Now there appears to be a growing difficulty in the way of this conception of unity. Every civilized society seems to be much less a unity than the societies of the past, not because it becomes less self-contained, but because the constant addition of conscious purposes to every institution and relationship and group tend more and more to *individualize* the institution, relationship or group, and make it, as it were, an end in itself. And further, this process of diminishing unity seems bound to go on, in proportion as the individuals with their activities become more and more occupied with their own purposes, specializing, as it were, upon their own ends as individuals and not as social units. This difficulty we must examine.

There is certainly something much more organic

about the life of most early societies than about our own. In the primitive tribal group, in the patriarchal family, in the Greek city-State, there was much more "oneness," and more subordination of all the members to this oneness, than we are now accustomed to. Every member was wholly a member; he was lost, a hopeless outcast, if he forfeited his membership. And his activities belonged to the society in a way in which most of ours do not: the unity of his society made itself felt throughout all his doings. In the medieval Church-State, also, a similar unity appears. Industry, art, civic interests, and the national interests, were all held together by their common subordination to the ideal of a spiritual power. The craftsman was ennobled by his service of a larger cause; civic life was unified by the bond which was symbolized by the Church as the centre of every civic group; the cathedral was the art synthesis of its age, as well as the synthesis of all the available resources of science and culture; temporal powers held their prerogatives as a trust for God and His Church; and the Holy See was supreme over all. This at least was the ideal, partly realized for a time; an ideal of unity to which we are sadly unaccustomed. But society as we know it to-day, since the great assertion of individuality at the Reformation, and the explosion of individualism towards the close of the eighteenth century, has lost all such unity, whether tribal or family or civic or religious. The social or national unity we know is of a lower order, it would seem, for the logical outcome of individualism has been the attempt to establish union on a basis of self-interest,

with materialism as the guiding principle, and incessant struggle, conflict of interests, and dis-harmony as the results. Not only do we eagerly separate Church from State, cathedral house from city council; but every set of our activities,—artistic, scientific, industrial, educational—shake themselves free as vigorously as they can from any kind of subordination to a dominating social unity. Business must be kept quite distinct from religion; economics must not be confused by the dictation of ethics. The intrusion of a Ruskin or an over-zealous bishop is resented as a matter of course, even as the forbidding of usury and a moral control of trade-practices were accepted as a matter of course in an earlier age. Politics and the pulpit are kept at arm's length; the Church and even the Bible are to be excluded from the school; science long ago won its battle over religious authority; art has its own ends, with which government must have nothing to do; commerce and industry are "free"—freed successfully from the interference of kings or grand-motherly statesmen. Each department of activities has its own aims and purposes, quite consciously present in some form to the people engaged in each. And they are *not* unified by any subordination to any clear end or purpose or principle of society as a whole.

If this were a true account of our present society, it would be useless to talk of the essential unity of social life. Still less could we urge that the unity is really increasing, not diminishing, and gives continually more meaning to our life and activities. We should be compelled to look for some other explanation of the

purposes of this or that institution or relationship : we should have to be content with sectional interpretations, and regard each set of purposes as distinct, each forming a separate end in itself, loosely related to a general good, no doubt, but possessing importance and significance without reference to any such unifying principle.

But the account is not a true one, though perhaps it may fairly describe a short phase in the social development—a negative phase, preparatory to something more positive than has gone before. In the life of an individual we are all familiar with such a phase, which marks the passage from one kind of unity to a higher kind, in the case of most people who really reach a progressive mental, moral, and spiritual life. At some stage in their history the dissolution of the habitual subordination to custom, tradition and authority is succeeded by a period of something very like anarchy, when the various interests and pursuits are disconnected, each set followed for its own sake in turn, each valued and enjoyed for its own sake, all—or most of them— independent of any one strong, compelling, over-ruling purpose. This rather anarchical stage usually appears at the time of entrance to full manhood, when most of the customary and accepted bonds are cut loose, and the youth is left to order his own life independently. It is a period which naturally causes anxiety to parents and guardians, whether it takes the crude form of a sowing of wild oats, or only a general restlessness and changeableness ; but it is, or may be, the period of transition to a new order of a conscious, purposive, self-determined life ; and, unless the development is distorted, or checked

by a return to habit, it leads on to a much truer unity than that of the externally ordered life which preceded it. For through the whole succeeding life of the individual there runs a constant effort to harmonize *all* activities in subordination to some chosen end and ruling principle. The end may be vague and ill-defined, and even subject to change; the principle may not be the highest, nor even a very worthy one. Success, wealth, fame, achievement, or the attainment of any object of ambition may be the dominant end in view; some odd, home-made rule of conduct, lacking in spirituality and loftiness, may supply the principle. But the conscious striving after unity is there, whatever the motive may be, however incomplete the harmony attained; and this is the really significant fact of the life.

Now the same phase necessarily appears in social life; we may assert this without any fear of straining the analogy between the individual and society. For social life is bound to pass through the same awakening from the unconscious or partly conscious habituation to accepted custom, tradition, and authority; and the awakening is similarly marked by the lawlessness which characterizes the extreme stage of "individualism," the misinterpreted freedom of individual activities leading possibly to licence rather than to liberty. Consequently we will modify the very gloomy account given of the present unharmonized, disordered, and sectional activities of society by asserting that they represent a temporary stage, natural and inevitable for any society which has so recently shaken itself

free from the old trammels of authority in all departments of thought and activity. And we will assert further that this stage is really preparatory to a higher unity ; and that society is bound to struggle after such a unity, and is even now struggling. It is easy to discern the signs of the effort on all hands to find and apply some unifying principle. Everything disconnected and disorderly is beginning to order itself into some kind of system, and relate itself to other systems. We see, for example, that trade and industry are beginning to be related in a truer way than ever before to the ends of health and welfare and individual good ; and to submit themselves willingly to new forms of social control in obedience to the requirements of social well-being. The economic theories which have hitherto justified the lawlessness of industry are also showing signs (as Ruskin long ago declared they must) of alterations due to the necessity of taking social ethics into account, and of adjusting all theories of industrial activity to the general theory of social progress. Does this mean that "freedom" of labour and trade will be lost? Certainly not ; though there is, of course, a danger that unnecessary and harmful fetters may be put upon them. But the essential freedom of industrial activities has been won, and will not now be lost ; it remains for us, however, to realize that no activities can be free without being also orderly, nor really orderly without being also free. Social control of industry may take some stupid forms ; but definite and regular subordination of industrial aims and methods to social ends is a foregone conclusion.

The activities of science, again, both in the elaboration of theories and in the application of theories to practice, shows similar signs of nearer approach to a general unity. Science no longer glories in its antagonism to religion; its best votaries are striving after some true reconciliation. But here again there is no question of a return to the submission of science to religious authority. *That* issue was fought to a finish many years ago. The problem now is to find a harmony which shall embrace both the laboratory and the church, both the scientific thought of the study and the unquestioning belief of the cloister. And in their practice, the conception of a uniting social aim is present alike to the professor and the priest; each has before him in some way the question: What are the social reactions of theory and creed? And more and more the two apparently irreconcilable enemies of a couple of generations ago will be found going hand in hand towards a common social goal. Does this mean that science will have become less severely scientific or religion less other-worldly and mystical? Certainly not; but simply that both, despite increasing "individualizing" or specializing, will of necessity be drawn into closer harmony in the common unity of social life. And by this I do not mean only that the High Church parson is becoming more whole-heartedly a social worker, and the man of science more obviously interested in social applications of his knowledge—such as eugenics or social therapeutics; nor again only that the religious teacher is opening his arms to evolution theories, and the

scientific teacher responding graciously by showing him how his dogmas may be made to fit them ; but rather that each is being impelled, by the common consciousness of a necessary dominating unity, to adjust differences in order that society may be saved.

It is hardly needful to trace the growing unity in civic and political activities. The opposition of party to party may be as strongly marked as ever ; so it ought to be, if the underlying feelings and impulses are healthy and vigorous. And no party is yet free from sectional bias, and a tendency to work for a part and not for the whole. But all parties alike aim more consciously at the common good, less consciously at the particular good of their supporters ; and this impulse is felt in the increasing sameness of the progressive efforts of all civic authorities to improve the condition of the populations under their care. So too with voluntary reformers. Many-sidedness is—and must be—the rule, for ideas and ideals multiply as our thoughts and activities become more diverse. But what is vaguely called “co-operation of effort” is, verbally at least, the accepted watchword ; association of all workers is becoming the fashion in every township and borough.

And finally, the dawning recognition of a necessary unity appears in the universal tendency to draw together into a common camp rival theories or sects or sections—without necessary loss of individuality. Union of this kind is becoming the rule, from union of Free Churches to union of labour interests—all very partisan, doubtless, but probably a step to the recognition of a wider union of interests in which the interest

of the whole society will be the bond. In idea, this wider union is at least proclaimed in the moderate Socialism which most appeals to thinking people of every class and creed. This may or may not be mistaken in economic principle, in ethical basis, in social presupposition; but at least its general aim is true—the aim at a harmony of many conflicting interests in subordination to a common good.

We cannot define the coming principle of unity. All we can say with certainty is that it is *some* common end, some conception of a good believed to be the good of all; and from that conception must depend all the particular conceptions of special purposes which give meaning to the institutions, relations, and activities of our social life. This is the conception of social unity to which we refer for an explanation of the significance of our social environment and our social behaviour. Each department of that environment, and each separate set of activities, *can* be treated separately and explained up to a point by reference to its special purpose. Industry may be dealt with as the means to wealth-production, and so explained by the economist. The family may be dealt with as the means to health-production, and so explained by the eugenicist. As such they are means to an end which gives them *a* meaning. But this will not satisfy us, for their real social meaning can only be found through their relation to the whole existing social purpose. Industry and the family are more than means to particular ends, just as a man is more than a wealth-producer or a father. And it is this something more than the particular function that we want to reach.

How does the industrial system or the family system harmonize with the general social end? What is its meaning in relation to that? How does the wealth-producer or the father stand in relation to the same end? What is his significance as a good or bad employer or fellow-workman, as a good or bad father and head of a family, as a good or bad citizen or general social member? To these questions we want the answer. But the sectional interpretation cannot give us the true social value of employer or workman or family member, any more than it can give us the true value of the industrial system or family or any other institution. The essence of the ethical view is that it alone defines the place and social quality of each institution and each social functioner in relation to the whole scheme of agreed purposes of the social life in which all have their place.

CHAPTER VII

THE IMPLICATIONS OF CITIZENSHIP, AND THE RIGHTS AND DUTIES OF THE CITIZEN

WE have now reached the conception of society as an ethical structure—a more or less unified system of purposes embodied in institutions and in established relationships, all subordinated to a common end, which, in theory at least, is agreed upon, chosen, and willed by the society as a whole. In the light of this conception, which will become clearer as we proceed, we shall be able to explain part of the relation of the individual members to their society, so far as this relation is expressed in the word *citizenship*; and also, in part, the relation of separate institutions to the Great Institution and to its general aim.

We have seen that in every form of society, and in every stage of social development, the place and work, the social value and significance, of all the members are determined by the existing social structure and function. This is not more true of the bees in a hive than of the members of a patriarchal family-society, or the citizens of a Greek city-State, or the members of a modern nation. This determination, of course, involves a general

subordination of powers and prerogatives to the structure and its objects ; and therefore, also a consequent limitation of activities. The subordination, with its accompanying limitation of activities, is the most obvious and important fact about all social life ; it is also the most permanent characteristic of it. But the kind of subordination changes as society develops. We have traced it through earlier forms of absolute, blind, complete subordination to force and natural necessity ; of less complete though still rigid and generally blind subordination to custom and tradition ; of partly conscious subordination to dimly perceived purposes ; until finally we find it altered into a new kind of subordination altogether—far less complete, since spontaneous activities grow side by side with it ; far less rigid, for change of determining structure and function is much more frequent ; far less blind, since consciousness of purpose is rapidly increasing ; but nevertheless limiting, and yet unlimited, in its application to our activities as social members. In other words, as the ethical stage begins to be reached, the characteristic of subordination and limitation re-appears, though in a new form. We translate social structure into a system of chosen purposes ; we translate function into accepted duty ; but the subordination of ourselves as socii to the system with its duties remains the obvious fact about our social life. Only with this difference : so far as our society is really ethical, there is a conscious recognition of the limitations as not only necessary but also *good*, because due to the fact that each of us is one among other persons or selves ; and there is also a conscious recognition of

the fact that *all* members must participate in the common end, and that this universal participation is the real reason for all the limitations.

This may be expressed in another way by saying that the ethical society or group is *a system of duties and rights*, and that its purpose is the attainment of the good end by all socii. And this essence of the group-life, with its subordination of our activities and choosings and willings at every turn, enters into *all* our social doings, whatever particular end we may be trying to reach ; and it enters in as a peculiar defining or limiting factor. The peculiarity lies in the fact that, though it dominates the whole of our social life, it does so, not as force or compulsion, but as a chosen principle. All our individual purposes and actions are subordinated to it : the limitations imposed upon us are therefore far more numerous than in any earlier stage of social life, just in proportion as our purposes and actions are far more varied. But, for the good citizen, at any rate, the limitations are in no sense limitations of his freedom nor restrictions of his choice nor fetters laid upon his activity ; they simply define for him the necessary direction of the good-will which he accepts and shares.

But let us examine in detail the system of duties and rights. We must note first that, when we speak of the citizen's rights, the positive side of his duties, we do not mean either natural rights, or political and legal rights. In the earlier political and social philosophy, especially during the eighteenth century, it was customary to imagine a state of nature which was taken as an ideal, and the word "natural" was applied in the sense of "that

which ought to be." The word was remarkably convenient, because of the air of authority which it seemed to give to the philosopher's imaginings ; it implied that his ideal had once existed "naturally" or by the decree of nature. And this reference to a state of nature was perhaps an excusable device, because, in an age in which most arguments had to be based upon authority, it was necessary to read a new ideal back into an imagined past in order to link it with an authority which could not be questioned. And, to make it more plausible, the ethical idea of agreement was also imagined, and introduced in the form of an assumption of some very early compact, into which our ancestors, who lived in a state of nature, were supposed to have entered voluntarily, and so a basis was found for new rights which could not very well be explained as "natural." But at the present time we do very wisely to avoid the word "natural" altogether in this connexion ; it will be time enough to use it again when we are able to distinguish what is natural from what is the result of man's planning.

Again, the rights and duties which we are considering, are not those which are established by law, or depend upon the existence of the State as a coercive power. These can only define for us a small part of the content of the system of duties and rights which is the essence of our social life ; they are the definite social assertion of this small part. What we really mean and must mean by this content is the whole of the claims which are allowed or enforced, upon us and upon all, by the reflective opinion of our society, *and* by ourselves

as conscientious interpreters of the social purpose and aim.

Now when we apply this to the meaning of social membership or true citizenship, we are met by two initial difficulties. In the first place, we find everywhere a strangely narrow conception of citizenship and its involved duties and rights ; in the second place, we find that it is extremely difficult to state the conception and its real content. Most of us habitually think of citizenship as confined in some way to our relation to the State—that is, to the community as coercive and embodying a force external to ourselves ; and we think, too, of the common good as something very vague and thin, because quite general or universal. Thus, I find myself thinking chiefly about my duty to fight if ordered to, or to act on a jury if summoned ; or of my responsibility for the general policy of my country ; or of my right to vote, and to claim the protection of the law. Now it is true that the common good as formulated by the whole community, or the general will expressed in the laws and edicts of my State—these alone have coercive power over me, because these alone are paramount and really include all other duties and rights. But we can hardly avoid thinking of them as a kind of outer framework or restricting shell ; while for the basis of most of the duties and rights of which we are conscious as social units we refer to the relationships and groupings (with their purposes and aims) which are parts of the whole. For example, a man does not usually think of his duties as a husband or father as essentially citizen duties, but as family duties, involved in the existence of the family

and its relationships ; nor does he think of his duties as a workman or employer as citizen duties, but as duties involved in his relation to an industrial system on the one hand, and to his own and other people's industrial purposes on the other. It is true that, fortunately for us, most of our different sets of duties are loosely held together in a single system by a vague reference to morality and religion ; but the definitely social side of all duties is apt to be lost sight of.

Again, we are never able to express, even in outline, the full content of the conception of citizenship which follows from our conception of society as an ethical system. In one way, this is, of course, inevitable, for the duties and rights are infinite ; yet it is equally certain that every citizen ought to have a clear idea of the general duties which full membership of a society involves. This, however, very few of us have, and consequently, in all our discussions of citizenship or the extension of citizenship, we are hopelessly at sea. "A citizen must serve in one or two definite capacities," it is said ; or "Every citizen must be able to fight for his country if called upon." Is that all ? It is not even true, in so far as it means that every citizen must be able to express, if need be, the force upon which the State rests ; for this is not only contradicted by the facts, but contradicts the true doctrine that will, and not force, is the real basis of social life.

In order to get nearer to a true view, we must put aside the false conception of a narrow citizenship which has become common in a society in which the importance of sectional interests has been over-emphasized, and

must concentrate our attention upon the necessary implications of the ethical structure of duties and rights as an all-embracing and dominating structure. And, in doing so, we shall perhaps do wisely to consider only the duties, since it is a defect of all citizens, very noticeable at the present day, to think a great deal about rights, and a very little about the correlative duties.

If we go back to the best Greek ideals, we may distinguish four simple divisions of citizen duties.* There were first the duties connected with livelihood—of self-support, maintenance, and care of family, and so on. There were next the duties connected with military training and war, resting upon the principle that every citizen held his life at the disposal of his community. These were perhaps the most obvious duties, and were certainly regarded as the first and also the ultimate duties of a citizen. Thirdly, there was a general responsibility for your country's policy. And, fourthly, a real responsibility for its greatness—its fame, prosperity, beauty, and every other element which made it great. The principle underlying this might be expressed by the assertion that your distinction is your country's distinction; and all through the conception of the citizen duty there ran the feeling that every one's success or failure in everything he did or attempted was also his country's success or failure. Consequently, we may say that the conception was built up upon the principle that citizenship covered *all* your life and all your activities.

* I am indebted to one of Professor Bernard Bosanquet's essays on citizenship for this account of the Greek conception.

Now this ideal conception was not an exaggeration due to the peculiar circumstances of the little Greek States, which resembled large families rather than nations, though no doubt the completeness of the conception was made easier by this fact. It was simply an assertion of the principle which follows clearly from what we have seen to be the necessary view of the unity of the system of social life. In our modern national life, the sense of unity is not realized, and the all-pervading duties of citizenship are lost sight of in the wilderness of interests of both individuals and groups. Our extraordinarily complex life, our far too numerous activities, our strong assertion of an individual freedom which we very imperfectly understand, and the assumed importance of our occupations as self-seekers or self-developers—all these things help to drive the citizen idea into the background. Yet, in theory and also in fact, it is still the necessary and single basis of social duty and social morality. Perhaps also the looseness of most social ties or bonds, the plasticity and vagueness of most communal relations, make it additionally hard for us to think of the great duties, and easier to think of duties as those of the smaller, inner circles, such as the family or the workshop. And so nowadays we have to search for the citizen duties underneath or behind these others—just as we have to go out and search for our neighbours to whom Samaritan kindnesses are due. And for some people this search is peculiarly difficult—to single “unattached” women, for example. The community is to them rather a pathless desert than a well-marked

territory in which the ways of duty are clearly defined. No wonder many of them ask to be made citizens in order that the content of their social membership may be made more explicit!

Now the first step towards a rehabilitation of the true citizen conception is to regard and treat everything in the light of a common good to which all sectional aims are relative. This is equivalent to saying that we must think of every little group or system, with its bundle of duties, as part of a great whole, and subordinated to this, and deriving its importance from this. When we think of our family or our employees or our friends, we realize a fairly clear scheme of duties connected with each, but we usually think of this as a self-contained and separate scheme. But this is just what it is not; and only when each scheme is seen in its true subordination to the greater scheme of social duties can we grasp its full content. It may be noted incidentally that this does not at all imply that the social member who wishes to realize the citizen idea ought therefore to neglect the more special duties and devote himself or herself to the wider duties of social work or public work. But it does imply that a deeper meaning must be read into all the special schemes of duty in consequence of their real dependence upon the wider scheme and the greater good to which it is relative. And this is the necessary social counterpart to the injunction that we should do all to the glory of God.

This, however, is no mere exhortation. It is a simple statement of what must happen and is happening. By its own advance, society is forcing us all to

realize the citizen-conception in connexion with every institution and every relationship and every kind of activity—as will appear when we deal with the gradual unification of the purposes of all special groups and interests. But at this point the important thing to realize is that citizenship—as the unifying whole of all social duties—has been lost sight of among the parts, and needs to be restored to its place; and that till it is restored, no real social policy, no true moral advance, no sureness of dealing with any difficulty, is possible. We are all squabbling sectionally and vainly, not because we do not know the common good or end, but because we do not really think about it. We mistake the sectional interests or aims for the greater good, and disagreement is becoming more and more acute. For the moment also the result is an apparent loss of all ideals, since (religion apart, and speaking only of ordinary social activities) there can be no ideal which is not also a social one, no completely good aim which does not include all the good aims of all our community. It is for this reason that education seems, for the time being, to be ideal-less; for its aim is individual distinction, subject only to group or class interests. “Education does not now mean, as it should, the victory over idols of the class,” in the interests of the good of society which over-rides all classes. Industry and occupation are ideal-less; for each section is aiming at its own good only, not as a group of citizens, but as factions of competitors. Industry does not mean, as it should, the victory over want, in order that all the social members may pass on to higher interests than those of

the factory and the office, in a full co-operation from which none are excluded. Family life no longer means the nursery of citizens, but the life of a group with its own separate interests, turning out individuals equipped for their own advancement, or perhaps, at best, for the advancement of the family. And even the Churches seem to become antagonistic to the true civic sentiment, multi-secting the community into rather hostile groups, instead of "the Church" being for all of us the intensification of all civic and social feeling. As we saw in the last chapter, this is all in part the result of an individualism which reaches its culminating point in the separatist interpretation of the principle that every Englishman's home is his castle; but as we also saw, it is part of the process of widening out into a greater citizenship—a process of which the first steps are necessarily individualistic, and therefore apparently socially retrograde.

And finally, the sex difference seems to be coming more into play, not as a form of diversity in unity, but as a disintegrating difference—a further sign of the fact that the controlling conception of citizenship, or the controlling influence of social unity, has been temporarily submerged, and we therefore seem to have lost the clue to the adjustment of duties and rights, since we have no harmony in our thoughts to which to refer our problems.

This principle of a dominating citizen-conception may be illustrated in reference to the political question in which the meaning of citizenship is most obviously involved at the present day—I mean, of course, the

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question of extending the franchise to women. The claim on the part of women to the right to share in the control of their community's policies is usually met by a denial of their ability to perform certain specific duties. This denial, at any rate, is not pertinent. Citizenship requires no sameness of specific duties; and the principle that the citizen's life is held at the disposal of the society does not imply that no one can be a citizen who cannot fight. But the claimants to the right of citizenship seldom put their claim in a really valid form. The form which it should, and sometimes does, take is this: "In the duties which we perform as our life's work we realize that we are working for the common good. We are conscious of a true citizen responsibility in our lives: our motherhood and home work, our industrial functions and social work, are all part of the community's work; and we are doing it all not merely for ourselves and our families, but for all. We ask that this responsibility shall be recognized and ratified and increased. Our justification is that we are no longer *merely* mothers, daughters, factory workers, or servants, with our conceptions of duty limited to the small circle of family or workroom; but that we *feel* the claims and needs of the great circle of fellow-citizens, and are able to adjust our duties in relation to those claims and needs." Such a claim, validly made, would be undeniable, and would not be affected at all by any counter-assertion that there are weaknesses or physical or mental differences which make women less capable than men of doing certain things or performing certain duties. (The assertion of inability to form a

judgment on difficult questions of public policy has, of course, nothing to do with the matter, even if in any sense true.) But the claim might be validly met if it were possible for men to reply: "There are limitations (inherent or traditional or due to necessary occupation) which prevent you from seeing your duties and your actions in relation to the larger whole. You are inevitably narrowed down—by the kind of life you lead or have been forced to lead, and by the kind of work you do, or have been forced to do. And you cannot be expected to see the citizen duty in and behind your family duties or your industrial and social duties." But, unfortunately, so far as this objection is a true one, it applies to the majority of men with equal force.

It is not my business to attempt to decide the rights and wrongs of the question here. But this at least is clear: if all duties are really citizen duties, set in limited frames, then the inability of any one to perform some special duty, such as fighting, is no argument against his or her citizenship. Every one is competent for citizenship who is capable of feeling and applying the citizen-conception to his or her ordinary round of duties, whatever these may be. For all duties are public, in so far as they take us an unlimited distance beyond the ordinary self and its interests; it is a gross illusion to imagine that the duties which deal with public matters are the only public duties, or even the most important.

We have next to consider the application of the citizen-conception to the interpretation of some of the institutions of our social life, and also to the

interpretation of some of the necessary changes which are taking place in the content of those institutions. By so doing, we shall be able to justify the assertion already made that society is being forced to bring its sectional activities and interests more and more under the domination of the unifying scheme of purposes to which they are all in reality subordinate. And we will take for illustration the two institutions to which reference has so repeatedly been made in these pages, namely, the family and private property; partly because of the importance of these two institutions, and partly because they are peculiarly involved in the process of change of content which we wish to consider.

The conception of the family, unlike that of citizenship, has a full enough content for most people. The duties and rights, the responsibilities and aims, belonging to it may be very hazily presented to consciousness, but at least they are felt to be very numerous and very important. But much of this content—especially the *object* of the family, that for which it exists, its function and its value—is seldom thought of in relation to the whole social purpose. There is a marked tendency, even among the most thoughtful defenders of the institution, to regard it, and therefore to defend it, as an end in itself. The history of the family partly explains this tendency. Society really began in the family, and grew out of it—society, that is, as a system of common ties of feeling and mutual support. Not only has the family always been the nursery of social feelings and aptitudes, but also all the ties which make a society one have their early formation and growth in the family life. In most

early groups this development of society from the family germ is quite clear: the progress is marked by the stages of phratry, clan, gens, tribe, and so on. And, as we have noted, in the most highly developed and stable form of early social life—the patriarchal form—the family *was* society, and society was the family. In this way the family may be seen to be prior to society, and in a sense more important than it.

But the movement towards a very large and very complex national society, which we are trying to realize to-day, alters all this. Not only is the dependence of society upon the family lost sight of, and the fact of its origin forgotten, but the family itself falls back into a peculiar and almost isolated position. Some people would even go so far as to say that it now resembles the superseded originator of a great movement, who, so long as he survives, cannot very well be shelved, although he is no longer of supreme importance, and may even be a nuisance; but has to have a special and rather anomalous position found for him. And there is this much of truth in the analogy, that the family does appear to many of us as occupying a rather anomalous place—not exactly isolated, but rather disconnected, wrapped up in its own doings and ends, not integrally a part of the citizen system, but standing on a basis of its own, and treated as an end in itself and usually existing for its own private ends. Sometimes it even seems to be anti-social, or at any rate opposed to the growth of social unity—an aspect which is illustrated not only by the severe separateness of its shell, the home, but also by the self-centredness of the parental

position, and of the usual family aims. By this I mean that, in all classes, the common attitude of parents to children may be called a narrow and self-regarding attitude: the question which is uppermost is, What do *we* want of the children or what do *we* want them to be?—not at all, What does society want of them, and what does society want them to be? And further, the family is expected to hang together for itself as against other families: to conserve *its* traditions, its property, its blood and lineage; even to keep itself pure and uncontaminated by too much contact with other families in other positions.

Now this "individualism" of the modern family is a real difficulty. It is felt to be in conflict with the social unity, whether this is regarded as a form of organic unity, or as the ideal unity of a true citizenship. And it is probable that the consciousness of this antagonism lies behind most of the wild proposals for abolishing the individualist family with which we are familiar. But the point which we have to note is that the process of breaking down the separatist character of the family is now going on, and has been going on for nearly a century past, not as a result of any definite attacks upon the family, but as part of the inevitable process by which each particular system of duties and rights and purposes is necessarily subordinated to the social system, even when we least expect it. Thus we find that, on the one hand, the absolutism of parental authority and power has been very considerably lessened during the last hundred years. The rights of the father have been curtailed, and in part transferred to the State.

New forms of industrial legislation, new forms of legal protection of women and children, have made it impossible for parents to follow entirely their own interests and whims in the control and management of their families. On the other hand, parental duties and responsibilities have also been lessened, and transferred to the State. To the latter, and not to the parent, belongs now much of the responsibility for the education and training, and even for the disciplining of the children. The duty of keeping them in health is now definitely shared by State and parent; it is possible that the duty of clothing and feeding them will soon be shared too. The process has gone on without much direct consciousness of the direction in which it has been leading. But it is now becoming conscious; we begin to realize clearly that it involves, on the surface of it, a weakening or thinning of the content of the family-system; and many people are even hailing the process, and urging it on, as the necessary step to "socializing" the family, and so strengthening the social system. Others deplore the tendency, looking with the gravest alarm at any lessening of the content of rights and duties belonging to the family-system,—failing to see that the process is, as it were, the Nemesis for our neglect of the true citizen-conception lying behind the conception of the family's purposes.

But to understand what the process really does and may lead to, we must examine it a little more closely. There is, first, the undoubted fact, already referred to, that the compact, small, self-centred family of modern times had grown imperfect—sometimes even selfishly

anti-social. It is also an undoubted fact that, in our industrial age, the economic functions of the family have been exaggerated. Thus, the very sound conception of the family as an economically independent or self-supporting unit has been allowed, in the richer classes, to degenerate into the conception of the family as a property-accumulating unit ; and the obvious duty of independent family maintenance has led in the poorer classes to the use of all the members as useful wage-earning instruments, to the grave detriment of their development as useful citizens ; while in most classes there has been a tendency to turn education into a method of preparing the children for industrial competition and success, instead of a means for preparing them for life in a larger sense. The general concentration of attention upon economic ends has thrown too much into the background the ends of health, morality, and religion ; and the family has neglected its work as the nursery of *sane* citizens equipped for a wholesome, interested, and good life. Finally, the certainty that some of the "nobler" objects of the family have been submerged beneath the economic purposes induces the reflection that these may perhaps emerge when part of the weight of economic responsibilities is removed. The limited conception of parental duty as consisting chiefly in the duty of feeding and clothing the children may then, it is thought, be widened, and so bring once more into prominence the supreme duty of caring for the children's characters and souls.

These considerations suggest that *some* change is needed in the content of parental responsibility and

duty; so far they seem to support the Socialist's proposals for transferring various functions of the family to the State. But it must be noted that they do not in the least support any proposal to alter the essential relationships within the family; nor do they in the least support any attempt to socialize the family in the sense of *lessening* the content of the family system. For the most certain assertion which we can make about the ethical stage of our life is this: that in it every relationship will be fuller and richer, not emptier or poorer, side by side with completer subordination to the purposes of the whole society; that the activities connected with every little circle—the range of feeling, of thought, and of action open to its members—must increase concurrently with an increase of the activities of the larger circle to which they are all related; and that there can be no advance towards the ethical stage which does not bring with it a fuller individual life, and a fuller family life, as well as a fuller social life. It may have been wise in the past, and it may be wise in the future—we may say that it must be both wise and necessary—to transfer certain powers and activities from family to State, for the sake of efficiency, economy of effort, and the attainment of a recognized aim such as better education or increased health; it is certainly necessary to do so if the family conception has become one-sided and separatist in its tendency, in order to ensure that subordination of particular purposes to general purposes which we have seen to be essential. But behind these objects lies the far more important one of making possible an increased content of the

family life, a wider range of mutual ties, interests, and sympathies. Only, all of these must be felt to be subordinate to the citizen idea—and therefore to the common ends of society; the family system being felt to be an integral part of the social system, each increasing in content, the activities of the one being really activities of the other—in a specialized and more intimate form.

Turning next to property, we find a different kind of institution passing through the same process. The essence of private property is that it consists of certain definite rights of ownership, enjoyment, and use, ratified or allowed by society to its members. The institution involves numerous and very complex undefined relationships, and therefore also many undefined duties and purposes. But, like the family, it is a good illustration of an institution which ought to be, and must be, subordinated to social ends, though it is not so subordinated at present. It illustrates also the same movement towards restoring the subordination; the same extreme proposals for “socializing” it, even to the extent of abolishing it altogether; and the same apparent Nemesis following our neglect to realize the citizen-conception in our treatment of the institution.

Private property was originally determined by need: that is to say, in the early or “natural” stage, we find that it was usually defined by, and rested upon a basis of, collective need of a livelihood for the group, and individual need of survival and efficiency in the struggle for life. In both cases it served a natural purpose, that of survival; but there was also an element of

conscious and selfish human purpose behind it, in the shape of determination on the part of all who could to satisfy their desires. At a later stage of social development, private property is clearly seen to serve the purposes both of social stability and of individual development, both involving an increase of the extent of private property, together with greater permanence. Private property is now found to apply to land, the most permanent of all possessions ; and fixed laws of inheritance increase its permanence for the individual or family. But the "natural" end of strengthening the strong still persists ; while selfish individual purposes of satisfaction and aggrandizement appear in even greater force. When we reach the much later stage of an industrial society (the stage in which we are all living to-day), we find that all the prior purposes continue, and form part of the basis upon which the institution rests ; but that a new social purpose, or at any rate a new development of purpose, has brought about an enlargement of the extent of the institution. In order to meet the requirements of a very complicated industrial system, private property now includes the ownership of enormous quantities of capital wealth ; and though this cannot accurately be called new, it possesses a new importance, and carries with it new powers. In this stage the purely selfish purposes of individuals are perhaps more obviously served by private property than in any preceding stage ; and that fact, coupled with the fact that the social effects of the institution as now existing are very imperfectly understood, explains why its purposes seem so much out of harmony with the

general social aim. It is easy to see that both the ends of individual development and the ends of social well-being, might be better served by modified forms of the right of ownership and use, exactly as it is easy to see that a modification of the right of property which permitted the ownership of human slaves a generation or two ago was necessary in order to harmonize with the aims and conceptions of a really progressive community.

This very imperfect outline of the development of private property has been needed to show, in the first place, that there has been a continual change of the objects to which the right of private ownership has attached, accompanying the progressive changes of purpose underlying the institution; and secondly, that the property system was more clearly connected with the requirements of the social system in early days than it is now. The connexion seems almost to have been lost nowadays; private property is completely individualized, although lip-homage is still paid to the "duties" which are supposed to belong to it; and the institution is erroneously defended on the grounds of its usefulness as a means to individual development (often resolvable into the excessive satisfaction of a few individuals), rather than as a means to the fuller development of all and the direct furtherance of social welfare.

But in order to understand on what grounds or in what form we are to defend the institution, and what combination of individual and social purposes we would have it serve, we must examine it a little more closely. Of private property regarded as a system of rights of

ownership, enjoyment, and use of things, two meanings now stand out clearly. It signifies on the one hand the right to possess certain means of satisfaction of wants, desires, ambitions and aims on the part of individuals; in other words, the possession of the necessary *stuff* for realizing the external side of a satisfactory life. On the other hand, it signifies the possession of certain powers of control, guidance, and compulsion over the activities of other people; in other words, the possession of the power to modify the external side of other people's lives. Of these two meanings, the former indicates something quite necessary for individual life and development, at any rate up to a point. For there must be the right to possess *some* of the necessary stuff of a satisfactory life, if we are to determine our own lives ourselves at all. And there is no conflict here of individual with social purposes, provided the right of ownership is kept within limits. But a conflict may very soon appear, if rather strict limits are passed. Nor can it be claimed that the conduct of the best life requires the possession of private property beyond very narrow limits: such an argument is denied by all moral as well as by all religious teaching. The true citizen duty in this matter is something more than a vague responsibility for the tasteful or even the considerate use of property. Any one who realized the true conception of citizenship would instinctively shrink from the possession or use of more than a very limited amount of property of any kind. Such a feeling is not common at present; we are bound to admit that a new development of social conscience is much needed before we can be content to leave

the institution alone. For an obvious social danger exists in the insidious and apparently inevitable growth of individual wants which are not the needs of healthy development at all, but are more often personal desires of a distinctly anti-social tendency.

The second meaning of private property is also a necessary and permanent element in the institution—but only if the possession of power over others is taken in a peculiar sense. Mutual and reciprocal influence and guidance are necessary in any kind of co-operation of effort. There must also be different degrees of powers of influence and guidance in any complex and graded co-operation; and social life is certainly a very complex form of co-operation with numerous grades of capacity and function. But the true interest of society demands that the mantle of power shall fall on the shoulders of those who can best use it; and there is clearly a conflict with the social aims whenever the powers of control exceed any individual's "excellence" as compared with that of others. In other words, the good of property-power depends entirely upon the "aristocracy" of the owner; or as Ruskin put it, property ought to signify the possession of valuable things by the valiant: that is, the possession of power by those who are worthily powerful. The necessary "excellence" or "aristocracy" or "valour" used to be determined by inherited position, carrying with it some degree of superior education, knowledge of affairs, capacity, and, above all, sense of responsibility. And the power attaching to the ownership of property (usually in the form of landed estates) was then often justified,

not merely by the capacities of many of the owners, but also by the accepted fixity of grade and position and duty by which the exercise of the power of property was made easier. But the conditions are now changed. Property and excellence, possession and power to use wealth well, are not so naturally linked together; nor does the new social structure afford natural opportunities for the exercise of the power. And of even greater importance is the fact that there is now no recognized system of social duties belonging to the possession of wealth. The conscientious rich man must usually find or invent duties for himself—generally with little chance of inventing them with any real advantage to his community; while the rich who are not so conscientious illustrate the further danger of a plutocracy—namely, that in proportion as we value property for the personal advantages which it brings to the owners, we tend to fail to realize its social possibilities.

We thus see that there are both difficulties and dangers inherent in the institution of private property in every modern society. The owners of much property no longer possess a natural status carrying with it an accepted field for the exercise of power. Our society is no longer graded into classes of natural protectors of the poor, and their natural dependants; the powers of control and guidance, which cannot be separated from the possession of wealth, do not naturally, as they once did, find tasks ready to hand in complete harmony with the structure and purposes of social life. The owners themselves are no longer

differentiated from others by an excellence which equips them for the use of power ; nor have they the conception of clearly defined duties which so often justified the ownership of great estates in the past. There is no "richesse oblige" to take the place of "noblesse oblige" ; and even if there were, it would not be of much use. For the enormously increased complexity of all modern social and industrial activities and their reactions makes it quite impossible for the rich man, with good will and desire to use his wealth for the common good, to discover ways of doing so which are not in direct antagonism to some elements of the new social aims.

The institution of private property, as it now exists in extent and in content, cannot long escape revision. To assert this is not to advocate any wild socialism or communism ; it is simply a statement of what must happen, and of what is now happening to the institution. For no year passes without some modification of the institution, some curtailment of the powers that are associated with it. Every Government in turn revises the institution, limiting the rights and increasing the duties of property owners by little or by much ; and every tenable conception of the necessary unifying of purposes in the ethical stage of social life shows that this must be so. Defenders of the sacredness of either family rights or property rights take their stand upon impossible ground if they seek to defend either institution as it now is from any alterations or modifications. But they can make their position very sure if they take their stand upon the vital necessity, for the furtherance

of the true ends of society and of its individual members, of the existence of both family and property, modified indeed, to harmonize with the ends of our changing social life, but acquiring constantly a fuller, not a more meagre, content, side by side with the growing content of the social purposes.

Thus, in the case of both the institutions we have examined, we see that a very similar process has been passed through, leading from the stage of very close connexion between the purposes of the institution and those of society, to a stage of partial separation and antagonism, the individual purposes eventually tending to become anti-social. But this is probably only a transition stage. Already there has begun a purposive effort to rise to a higher stage, resembling the earlier superficially only, in reality new, because marked by willing subordination of individual purposes to social. In the early stages the subordination resulted from natural necessity and was maintained by the force of custom and status. In the ethical stage, the subordination can only come by choice and will, and be maintained by agreement. And whereas the content of the individual purposes in the early stages was small, meagre, and unsatisfying, in the ethical stage the content of each institution will be fuller than ever before, and more satisfying to the individual life, *although* combined with fuller content of the social purposes. Family life will mean increase of the opportunities for mutual affection and interest within the most vital circle which social life contains; private property will mean increased opportunities for individual

development, appreciation, and gratification of taste ; and in each case the increase will result from modifications of the institution in harmony with a truer citizen ideal ; and will be consonant with increasing, but willing, subordination of purpose to the social ends.

My argument in the latter part of this chapter is, of course, very incomplete, and is open to easy distortion. I am chiefly concerned to show that the specific rights and duties which at any time are recognized as defining the powers, opportunities, or requirements of any institution or relationship, do undergo continual change, and *must* change as society becomes conscious of new aims, or a fuller content is given to the conception of the common good. I also maintain that this inevitable change is likely to take obvious shape as a curtailment of existing duties or rights belonging to the institution or relationship ; but that nevertheless—it may be in spite of the curtailment, or it may be because of it—the powers, opportunities, and requirements connected with the institution or relationship must, as a whole, increase. This last point is not proved ; but it is involved in the general position I have taken up, namely, that all the really vital institutions and relationships, which make up the structure of our social life, increase in usefulness and in their capacity to serve our new and higher ends, as we grow more capable of a better life ; that new and higher purposes are read into them, as it were, and that they adapt themselves to these purposes. But other and new institutions are continually being formed, sometimes to serve new ends, sometimes to serve old ends in new ways ; and part of the change of the old institutions

consists in a transfer of part of their older purposes to these new institutions. The old institution is in this way pruned, in the confident hope that a fuller growth will follow from the part of the branch which is left. There is a strong probability that this result will follow, if the old institution is healthy at core, if the branch is really a vital part of the social tree, and if the pruning is neither excessive nor foolish. I do not pretend to prove that this or that particular pruning is either advisable or safe. It is possible to maim or kill a branch by over-pruning; it is possible to maim an institution such as the family by cutting out these or those duties. And, unless new shoots of duty are appearing or are likely to appear, then all pruning is dangerous. The conditions of comparative safety are dealt with in a later chapter, and need not be pursued here.

It would, of course, be a travesty of the argument to assert that I am maintaining that the right way to increase family affection is to diminish parental responsibility, or that taking away the duty of feeding children is a safe device for increasing the parents' care of the children. As well accuse me of saying that we have only to add fresh taxes, and apply new restrictions to powers of spending or investment, in order to make the owners of property enjoy more and use better the remnants of property left to them. One wishes this were so: the path of progress would then be so easy. But I do certainly maintain that all owners of property may, and eventually will (in proportion to their good citizenship), find it possible to get fuller *good* out of a property-institution whose rights have been modified in

numerous ways ; and that all parents and children may, and eventually will (in proportion to their good citizenship) find it possible to get fuller good out of a family life, externally diminished by the withdrawal of this or that old duty or right, but internally enriched by the growth of new ties and interests.

CHAPTER VIII

THE SPIRITUAL ELEMENT IN SOCIAL PROGRESS, AND THE NATURE OF THE TRUE INDIVIDUAL

WE have now completed the preliminary task of analysing the structure of society into certain constituent elements, and of tracing the process of social change to certain determining factors. As a result, we reach a conception of society as a complex organic structure embodying a still more complex mental system, possessing an ethical character in consequence of its relation to an end or collection of ends ; and we conceive of the social process as a constant push and pull of diverse factors, all related to one another as factors in a single movement directed to *some* end, which, though always indefinite, we are nevertheless compelled to regard as a moral end. And our treatment throughout has been in accordance with the definition of social philosophy first given, namely, an attempt to present social phenomena as belonging to an orderly system, and the changes of those phenomena as belonging to an orderly process, both system and process being dominated by a purpose or end from which the whole significance of each is derived.

We have traced the various stages of this purpose or end, from the "natural " up to the consciously purposive ; from the stage of given need and natural necessity up to that of the chosen aims of a reflective human consciousness. And we have examined the characteristics of social life and institutions in the stage which we are now trying to reach—the ethical. A grasp of the general purpose and necessary unity of this stage helps us to realize the probable *form* of further progress, and, in a very general way, its direction. We see that, if there is to be true progress, there must be an increasing effort to harmonize conflicting purposes, a growing movement towards greater unity of aim and effort, accompanied by more, and more willing, subordination to the common social good of all individual and sectional purposes. We do not pretend to gain a clue to the *details* of progress. These are beyond us ; we can merely guess at them. Indeed, it is necessary to keep our conception of the general purpose very vague and undefined—nothing more definite than a common good of which the actual content is always changing.

We are, however, justified in saying that, just as the ethical stage implies willing subordination of individual aims to the accepted dominant purposes of any group to which the individual belongs, so also the good citizenship, which alone harmonizes with the ethical stage, implies willing subordination of all social activities to the conception of the common good. And this reacts upon institutions of all kinds, such as family and property, as a "socializing " force, altering the content of each—altering, that is, the duties and activities belonging

to each institution, in regard both to the way in which they are done, and to the purpose for which they are done. And the alteration follows the lines which are dictated by an ever-growing realization of the partnership of society in all our social concerns, of the interest of society in all our interests, so far as these have a distinct social bearing.

But we have not yet reached the goal towards which our inquiry is directed. We have not yet grasped the real significance of social life, nor have we discovered any tests of progress. And it is easy to show that we cannot go further without a new and very difficult analysis.

1. With reference to the subordination of individual activities to the dominant social purpose, it is obvious that, even when this purpose is defined in the vaguest way as the common good, we cannot assert that any individual is bound to subordinate his own will and actions to any social good outside himself, that is, outside his own conception of what the common good is in relation to himself. Of course he must, as a moral being, bow to what he believes is the good of all ; but this is merely a pious moral assertion which establishes no rule and furnishes no positive guidance. It does not follow that the good citizen *ought* to bow to the common good or the general social aim as declared and asserted by his society, any more than it follows that the misguided citizen *will* be led to bow to any good except what he, mistakenly or selfishly, persuades himself is really the common good. We seem to be left with the old difficulty of utilitarianism. We have at

great pains established a principle or criterion which turns out to be only an ingenious arrangement of words or a high-sounding formula possessing no guiding meaning at all. If the good citizen is really good, he will, perhaps at all times, feel so strongly that part of the declared social aim is wrong that he will rather die than subordinate his will to it. And, of course, rightly. He cannot and must not sink his own ideal in deference to a worse one, even though this worse one is backed by the convictions of all his fellow-citizens. Clearly, then, before going further, we must try to define the relation of the individual to his society and social group, and discover whether there is any principle by which the will of the one must be limited by the authority of the other.

2. And we shall find that the issue is a far wider one. It is also a question of the *origin* of the social purpose which we have to examine. Hitherto we have been content to accept the purposes operative in each stage of social life as we found them. When or so far as social life belongs to the physical or vital stages, there is no need to ask *why* society bows to the push of necessity or the impulse of natural need, any more than we need to ask why a hunted animal runs away or a hungry child cries for food. When, again, we considered the stage in which the forces of mental activity and social contact are more obviously operative, we still accepted purpose as something which arose naturally and worked as a social force as a matter of course. But this easy avoidance of difficulties will serve us no longer. In every stage of social life—very slightly in the earlier,

very markedly in the later—aims and purposes are subject to a force which appears always to be drawing them on to some goal in front. Even the push of necessity and the impulse of natural feeling are, in the most primitive human societies, slightly modified by the *pull* of something resembling an ideal; and this pull seems to gather force as mind becomes more directive and the effects of the social interaction of minds become more marked. For in the mental stage progress takes place by means of *inventions*, using the word in the wide sense, which includes new ideas as well as new contrivances. We are often tempted to say that inventions are for the most part accidental; there seems to be no particular reason for the invention, at some particular time, of a spinning jenny or a steam engine or a new political or religious dogma. But a little reflection shows that it is truer to say that inventions are *never* accidental, but always appear in response to felt needs and purposes. This is probably true, even of mechanical contrivances; much more certainly of idea-inventions. And when we trace the cause of inventions to felt needs and purposes, we are falling back once more, not upon given and discoverable pressures, but, in part at least, upon the causal influence of the ideal whose origin we have not yet discovered.

So, again, when we consider the complication of processes involved in all social life, or mental life lived in close contact with other minds. Ideas or ideals arise in society, no one knows how or whence. In response to some need, we say, some need which is hardly consciously felt. Recent history supplies innumerable

instances of this, from the idea of Free Trade a century ago to the idea of Protection to-day ; from the ideas of *laissez-faire* to ideas of general supervision and control. And the process by which such ideas gather force seems clear, too ; either the need is general and generally felt (though perhaps not consciously), and so the idea spreads naturally ; or else the universal and all-powerful influence of suggestion carries it with compelling force into the minds of the many. An entire political party is converted to a new idea, hypnotized into accepting a new policy, by the repeated suggestion of its connexion with some known needs or accepted aims of party or of nation. And, if only the suggestion comes with due prestige, many others may be converted, even though there is, for them, no connexion whatever with any felt needs. So the process goes on naturally enough : first a natural and spontaneous origin of an appropriate bit of social ferment ; then a natural and inevitable infection of most of the social mass by means of continued suggestion.

But once again the explanation is obviously incomplete. For the process is unintelligible, both as regards the origin of the idea, and its development as a force of change, unless we assume the existence (in some minds, at any rate) of the conception of an ideal future which determines what ideas shall originate, and how far they shall be allowed to grow in influence. Apart from this "force beyond," the process in each stage is really purposeless. It is only significant for us as thinkers and as self-conscious beings in so far as

the purpose derived from some kind of ideal end enters into it.

Whence then the ideals? And whence the *will* of idealism? To these questions we are inevitably led; and if it is asserted that these are only questions of psychology, then we may retort that at least they are questions of a kind of spiritual psychology, and raise the issue of a spiritual force at work in our social life. And this, whether we call it a psychological or a metaphysical issue, is inseparable from the other question which we have found ourselves compelled to raise, namely, the relation of the individual to his society or social group, and the limits of the authority of the latter. With the consideration of these questions we will begin the discussion of the final problem—the problem which is involved in our initial assumption of a spiritual background to the life of human society. And the questions may be stated simply in this form: What *is* the individual? What *is* society to him? What is the social person? Whence does he derive his equipment of feeling, impulse, thought, will, and ideal?

1. Taking first the individual in the ordinary sense, we may describe him by reference to his most important characteristic as essentially and always a *self-seeker* or *self*; and we may describe society as part of the surrounding medium from which he has drawn much of the normal equipment of the self, and through which alone he can satisfy all the elaboration of desire and feeling of which he is capable. As a separate self or natural man, he owes to nature, working through his

ancestry, an equipment of feelings and impulses, some of them very necessary, some salutary, and some dangerous. As a social person, he owes it to society that this natural equipment is converted into something very different—an equipment of progressive interests of all kinds, with far greater opportunities for intenser feeling and fuller “realization.” For social life is a process by which much of the experience of past humanity is brought to bear upon each individual for his advantage ; a process of shutting off or pruning down many impulses, of drawing out and encouraging others, until the normal adult citizen is equipped with a very serviceable outfit of desires and controls calculated to give him (if he finds the opportunity) the maximum of satisfaction compatible with the stage of culture reached.

At the same time, his society is the medium in and through which alone he can develop and use this equipment. The carefully cultured powers of desire and attainment are useless apart from the social life—just as they could not have come into existence without it. In this way the relation of the individual to his society and to social life is very analogous to the relation of the ego to nature and the physical body. *I* cannot do anything, *I* cannot manifest any power or satisfy myself without the use of my body ; just so the social person cannot in any way satisfy his developed self without the use of society as a kind of larger body.

So far, the individual member of society may be regarded as wholly a product of nature and the social process, and entirely dependent upon nature and society

from first to last. And this is what the sociologist means by the individual—a social product individualized into a separate unit, but necessarily subordinate to the social unity, and inseparable from it. But to the social philosopher such a conception is profoundly unsatisfying: it fails to explain, or implicitly contradicts, the most significant characteristic of the individual, namely, his persistent antagonism to the society to which he belongs.

I use the phrase "persistent antagonism" advisedly, in order to guard against confusion with a kind of antagonism which may conceivably be regarded as a temporary defect of the normal citizen as he now exists. We all admit, of course, that each of us, as a separate self, is opposed to our society, as a collection of selves. We cannot help differing in aim; some of the desires of every individual self-seeker are sure to conflict with those of the social body; and, though the good man may subordinate his private aims to his society's purposes, the subordination will be accompanied by conscious effort and discomfort, and will only be achieved by a succession of painful suppressions. But this kind of disharmony, universal as it now is, is not the real difficulty. It may conceivably be destined to disappear eventually; and it is arguable that it is due to the fact that human beings are not yet completely "socialized," or that the social process has not yet finished its work of converting the natural man into the social person; only let the process continue long enough, and society and its members will really be "at one."

For the benefit of any one who cares to advance this line of argument seriously, let us admit that it *is* the great function of the social process to widen each separate self so that it should become less and less wholly self-centred. Every social relationship, every activity in which social feeling plays a part, has a supreme *moral* purpose—to socialize selves by drawing them beyond themselves, by compelling them to absorb others, as it were, or to make other people in some way part of themselves. This widening process may be pictured as a kind of education or drawing out of the self into ever-wider circles, enlarging the range of sympathy, fellow-feeling, altruism. But it must be noted that this is always a circular process, and leads back to the self from which it starts ; and it may therefore be objected that, however completely it does its work—however sympathetic or altruistic or genuinely social we become—we shall still remain self-centred and, in a sense, selfish. For the most altruistic person never acts except for the sake of self-satisfaction—in spite of the fact that his self embraces many other people, or that he has been taught to link others to himself. He works for them, he strives for their good and not his own, because he has projected his self into their lives, has made them part of himself, has carried his feelings and desires outwards so as to include them and so connect them very closely with himself. Even in the case of such a completely socialized person as this, the antagonism between himself and others still remains, though never allowed to break into any sort of actual discord. It lingers, at any rate, in the form of a

consciousness of separate self-hood, and therefore also a consciousness that open antagonism of aim is always possible.

This objection, however, would not trouble us much. If we could believe that the social process would, of itself, eventually produce a society of completely altruistic and fully socialized citizens, living and acting throughout in frictionless harmony with all the purposes of their society, we should not allow ourselves to be troubled by the fact that within the breast of each there still lurked a sense of separateness, a consciousness that it *might* be pleasant to go one's own way some day. They never *would* go their own way, any more than a good bee or a good cell does ; the consciousness that they *might* do so would merely be a harmless survival from their old, imperfect, pre-socialized days.

Now, apart from the rather obvious weakness of the argument here put forward in explanation of the antagonism of every self to its fellows, we may at once discard it on the simple ground that it does not explain the facts which really call for explanation. The antagonism of the individual as a self-seeker to his society as a group of similar self-seekers, is only one form of the antagonism to be explained. The real difficulty lies, not so much in the present separateness of the self's desires, as in the permanent separateness of the individual's aspirations. We can imagine a perfectly socialized citizen, whose self embraces all others, and whose desires are only directed to the admitted good of all. But we *cannot* imagine such a citizen freed from the antagonism which arises from the continual springing

up of new ideals, unless, indeed, we suppose him to have lost his individuality altogether. And his social excellence will not save him from this kind of antagonism ; on the contrary, his life will be a constant example of the growing opposition of the better to the good, and of the best to the better. All traces of self and its antagonisms may have been purged out of him ; his every desire and resulting social action may be conditioned by the fact that he and his society are one, in interest and in aim ; but his idealism—the out-push of new ideals which are his own—will increase, and will mark a new plane of separation between him as an individual and his social life as a temporary condition of his activities. This is the fundamental antagonism, from which no amount of perfecting by the social process can deliver us—an antagonism, not of a more or less narrow self to other selves, but of an eternally distinct individual to a society to which, as an individual, he is eternally alien.

2. But we are now introducing a distinction which requires a much more careful explanation. Hitherto we have been dealing with the individual in the ordinary sense, as a separate social unit, a joint product of nature and social life, the only sense in which a scientific sociology is entitled to regard him. We do not, however, need a philosopher to tell us that this account—quite apart from the inexplicable antagonism of such a unit to his social group—is a very unsatisfactory and imperfect description of what we really are. In the making of me in the motivating of many of my actions, in the determining of my conduct, in the

deciding of my will, something else is at work, something which neither nature nor the social process furnishes. What is it?

Let us, to avoid difficulties, call it the real or true individual, or the individual in a very different sense from that hitherto used—the true individual, that is, which lies behind the self or the person, and is far more real than it. This we may describe negatively, by contrast with the personal self. First, he is not in any sense a natural or social product. He does not owe his origin or original equipment to nature; he does not owe the elaboration of his equipment to society or the social process. He must, therefore, be regarded as both supra-natural and supra-social; he is the individual as a *datum*, not of this life or world at all. Secondly, he is not in any sense a self or a self-seeker; and, by consequence, he is not characterized by desire—not even by desire for the well-being of a widened or altruistic self. This presents a difficulty to us, chiefly because our use of terms leads us to identify desire with every conscious impulse upwards or downwards; we can hardly imagine an individual striving, except under the influence of desire of some sort. Eliminate all desire, and total cessation of effort or activity seems to follow necessarily; this is why we cannot imagine Nirvâna to be anything except (practically) a state of annihilation. Yet a different mode of conception, based upon subtler analysis, presents this state as one of intensest activity, *although* characterized by complete loss of self and the desires of self. Perhaps we can better understand the conception by

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saying positively that the true individual is a soul and not a self, that he aspires but does not desire, that he is a God-seeker but not a self-seeker. And, whereas the movements of the self are always circular—following interests which always return to the self from which they start—the movements of the soul are always away from self, always onward, always directly God-ward, never returning at all. Desire, with all the interests of the self, is thus totally distinct from aspiration ; just as even the highest form of altruism is distinct from the religious love into which no element of self enters. But here again our language leads to confusion ; for we apply the same terms to the shadow and to the reality, to the ordinary human and social manifestations of feeling, and to the supra-human and supra-social powers and attributes.

Thus, to obtain a satisfactory account of what each of us really is, we must combine with the natural and social influences, which enter into the building up of the self, the influences, however fitful and intermittent, of this true individual, which, as it were, lies behind every human personality. The self is thus the meeting ground of three sets of qualities or elements,—the natural, with all the propensities, desires, and aversions, and the capacities for feeling and thought, which nature supplies ; the social, with all the equipment of carefully pruned, controlled, and educated feelings and tendencies which ordered social life provides ; and finally the spiritual, with its peculiar power of inspiring the personality thus equipped and educated with aspirations which are derived neither from nature nor from society.

The human selves who make up society manifest themselves as very unequal combinations of these three elements. Some seem to be all "natural,"—bundles of desire and propensity, self-centred, unsocial, and uninspired; some appear to be no more than social,—expressions of the habitual and accepted aims and standards of the society which has "moralized" them, and from which, chameleon-like, they take all their colour; while in some few the spiritual force of the true individual within them is plainly at work, converting the natural and social product into the selfless idealist or even the saint on earth. Yet in every human being all the three elements are present, whether plainly manifested or not; and by the *self*, or the individual in the ordinary sense, we mean the natural and social shell which envelopes a kernel of spiritual power—the whole manifested as a human agent, imperfect, unstable, and self-centred, so long as the shell exists at all; by the *social person*, we mean this same self considered specially with reference to his social equipment; and by the *true individual*, we mean the spiritual reality within.

The conception which I am here trying to explain may perhaps be made clearer by comparison with the conception outlined in Browning's poem, "A Death in the Desert":—

"How diverse persons witness in each man
 Three souls which make up one soul : first, to wit,
 A soul of each and all the bodily parts,
 Seated therein, which works, and is what Does,
 And has the use of earth, and ends the man

Downward: but tending upward for advice,
 Grows into, and again is grown into
 By the next soul, which, seated in the brain,
 Useth the first with its collected use,
 And feeleth, thinketh, willeth, is what Knows :
 Which, duly tending upward in its turn,
 Grows into, and again is grown into
 By the last soul, that useth both the first,
 Subsisting whether they assist or no,
 And, constituting man's self, is what Is—
 And leans upon the former, makes it play,
 As that played off the first: and tending up,
 Holds, is upheld by, God, and ends the man
 Upward in that dread point of intercourse,
 Nor needs a place, for it returns to Him,
 What Does, what Knows, what Is ; three souls, one man."

But the three souls described by Browning do not, of course, correspond with the three elements which I have distinguished as the natural, the social, and the spiritual; although what Browning calls the last soul, that which Is, may certainly be identified with the spiritual element, or the true individual. It must be noted, however, that, while Browning calls this "*man's self*," very much as in our ordinary language we call it our better or true self, I have carefully distinguished it from the self, applying this latter term to our lower elements only, or rather, to the whole man only so long as these lower elements persist in him; while to the highest elements I have applied the term "*true individual*" or "*true soul*." This distinction is vital; there is no more potent cause of confusion than the loose language which describes as "*self*" every active element in us from the lowest or most earthly to the highest or divine.

We are now in a position to distinguish, though not so sharply, between the *aims* of the self or of the ordinary social person, and the *ideals* of the true individual, even those social ideals which are conceived and sought after by the true individual. For our social *aims*, like all our personal aims, are determined in origin and development by our social life and its conditions. But our *ideals* (using the word now in the strict sense which excludes any element of self-seeking) are drawn from a non-social source, inspired, if you will, by something beyond this world. This is generally admitted in the case of the individual aspirations of the saint or the religious soul. It is no less true of the aspirations which take a social form. For the true social ideal is always a vision of a City of God: a vision of a society so changed as to have become a fit habitation for souls—not the most satisfactory or comfortable habitation for selves. It is in this sense that the Utopias of Plato or St. Augustine may properly be called ideals. Their value does not lie in any suggestions they contain for the increased well-being of social persons; but in the confident assertion of the necessary social conditions of well-being for human souls.

We may stop at this point to apply these rather unusual conceptions to the problems of social life which we wish to resolve. First, as to the antagonism of the individual to society. Such antagonism is clearly inevitable for the member of human society regarded as a self. Although his normal equipment of attributes and powers is derived from and developed by nature and the social process, nevertheless each separate self

is and remains separate, and in aim, opposed to both nature and society at many points. He is conscious of an end which is not society's, however selfishly he interprets it; dimly conscious, too, of an overlord other than society; conscious again that he exists for a purpose not to be described as a social purpose. But in an ideal social state this antagonism would disappear. So far as each member of society realized his true individuality and subordinated his self-interests to it, the *kind* of opposition and separateness which characterizes selves would disappear, and the condition of willing subordination (which we saw marked the ethical stage of family or society) would be completely attained. And for this reason: the selfless individual can have no conflict of desire or *aim* with other people or with his social group. The well-being or satisfaction which society may be seeking, as a society of selves, is nothing to him; it is not on the same plane as the goal on the attainment of which he is set. And an ideal society, or society of such individuals, would in this way realize the ethical stage absolutely, without any friction or discord.

But this does not mean that for the good man there is no conflict in society as it now is; only that the conflict will not resemble the clashing of interests to which we are accustomed. The aim of society, we may safely assert, will always differ decidedly from the social expression of the completely good man's ideal; for it is distorted by self-seeking, while his is not. And so long as he is a social member, so long, that is, as his activities are conditioned by the social life, he is bound to care about the social aim, to be troubled by its

wrongness, to oppose it, in fact. He cannot escape, as a part of society, from the difficulty which also confronts him as a part of nature. It is nothing to him what nature makes of his body; yet it *is* something to him, so long as he inhabits a body and depends upon it. How far he is to submit to its demands, and let it alone, and how far oppose it and strive to alter it, are questions which he has to answer somehow.

It is evident, then, that we have not got away from the difficulties of conflict of some sort. Our step from the lower to the higher individual is not a step clean out of all social perplexities—unless, like Plato, we cut the knot by leading the real soul out of the social cave altogether. Nor do we arrive at any principle by which to determine the question of submission or resistance, whether active or passive. This only is clear: the really good individual is not interested in the social aims in the same way as are ordinary social members. It does not matter to him that the social aim runs counter to his welfare as a self, because this is no longer of any vital importance to him; and his real welfare, as a soul, cannot be affected by any social happenings. Therefore it is easy for him, in one way, to bow to the social aim in everything. But it *does* matter to him that the will of society is wrong. Thus, it will be of little consequence to him whether the policy chosen is that of Free Trade or Tariff Reform; of peace or war; whether the result is increase or decrease of wealth; whether this or that device for dealing with problems is adopted, this or that mistaken method. But it *does* matter that society is always too selfish, and

therefore neglects its poor : too sectional, and therefore never at peace. And so he must needs protest, to the death if necessary, against the wrongness of the social aim. And perhaps, if he continues to live as a social member, the really good individual may often have to die as a consequence of his protesting. At the same time, it is certain that he will not resist the social will by raising his head against it at every point at which he believes it to be mistaken. He knows that the perfecting of the social condition is an endless process, and therefore very slow ; it is also a process of improvement by trial and mistakes and experiences slowly acquired from the consequences of mistakes ; above all, he knows that the steps in the process are not *his* secret, nor revealed to him, any more than are the steps of nature's processes. Therefore he willingly submits to the demands of his society, only protesting against the non-moral and non-spiritual elements of the dominant aim. Is a war decided upon ? To him it may seem quite certainly a mistaken war ; but he will fight by the side of his fellow-citizens, and die in the fight willingly. Is a policy chosen which offends all his social opinions ? None the less will he submit to it cheerfully as a loyal citizen should. For let it be noted (and this will be clear later) that he knows perfectly well that his social convictions, and the social details of his ideals, are after all not inspired, but only the outcome of his particular and partial contact with social life as an ordinary social person ; and perhaps they are not more likely to be right than the detailed opinions of any other decent citizen. Only the general direction and intention

of the ideal are matters of complete certainty to him.

Now if we leave the perfect individual, and consider the normal and moderately good members of society as they actually exist, we may discover the principle which governs the conduct of the absolutely good man, and determines the kind of willing submission we have predicated for him.

In most of us, we are bound to confess, the self is very dominant, and the true individual very dormant. As selves, and still more as social persons, we owe a debt to nature and society to which it is hard to assign any limits. As souls, we owe no debt at all. As selves, we owe to society a willing submission; and society has authority over most of our social activities and self-activities and interests. If we wish to get married, society has a right to dictate the terms; if we wish to make money, society properly decides the methods we may use; if we are artists, striving to realize our conception of beauty, then society must first give us permission before we may impress upon others the forms of our æsthetic conceptions. The individualist who denies this, as many do, is trying to repudiate the debt, claiming that the self has some right of its own to determine absolutely the lines of its further development. But the development of our personal and social interests is in our own hands only by leave of society. It may be expedient (for that development or for social welfare) that society should leave the social unit alone in this or that set of activities. But that is a matter which society must decide. There is no principle

which shall determine any division of spheres. The natural and social product is in the hands of nature and society from first to last.

And to this authority of society, we may fairly say that its responsibility is correlative. The society which draws out the powers of each social person is so far bound to see that the powers are not thwarted by lack of opportunity. It may not starve the capacities which it has itself called into existence. Society must consider each of its members, as a family its children. But we are not entitled to speak of the authority or the responsibility of society as absolute ; since the development of each self is, in part at least, determined by the will of each, conjointly with the influence of society—a point to which we return in a moment.

When we turn to the true individual, the position is totally reversed. Over him, society has no authority; and for him, no responsibility. He owes it no debt for his development ; he has no claim upon it for opportunity.

The principle here outlined—that society is paramount over us *qua* selves, but powerless over us *qua* true individuals or souls, has been dimly recognized and acted upon by the impulse of modern societies. The struggle for freedom may have begun by confusing the issue ; confusing, that is, the necessary freedom of the true individual with the impossible freedom of the social person. But gradually the confusion is giving way to the recognition of the principle that society may interfere with us as social persons, and therefore in all our external activities ; but not as souls, in the really separate activities of the soul.

So far I have emphasized the sharp distinction between self and soul, and the antagonism between them. Following all exponents of the implication of our spiritual nature, I have contrasted the unreality of the one with the essential reality of the other. The natural and social man belongs to the world of sense impressions and perpetual change ; the spiritual man to the world of realities, by contrast with which this world is only a cave of shadows. And, as far as our worldly interests and activities are concerned, the soul is conceived, in this view, not so much as agent, but rather as the silent watcher of all the self's activities, gaining the experience which such a watcher might gain, but holding aloof, playing no active part in the unreal world, only learning and waiting until it is set free to act unhindered in the world of reality to which it belongs. But this sharp distinction will not fit with the facts we are considering. However valid and valuable it may be for the mystic, it leaves the social philosopher in an impossible position, faced, as it were, by two aspects of a duality neither of which can be brought into any intelligible relation to the other. Yet he knows well enough that they *are* related ; that self and soul interact continually ; and that the social life in which the interactions take place has a very definite reality which is not destroyed by contrasting it with the absolute. Also, to be more explicit, he knows that all the actions of every self, into which deliberate choice enters, are also actions in which the soul takes part, the will being, as it were, the connecting link between the two. And this holds good of all the social units, and of every society of such

units, of whom conscious willing can be asserted, even though the stage of "religion" (and therefore of the soul's awakening) has hardly yet been reached. Consequently the social philosopher asserts roundly that the chosen acts of all persons, and of all societies, are of real importance, an importance which is not adequately described even by calling them moral acts. For the word "moral" is often taken as implying no more than a harmony with social needs ; and our chosen acts have, all of them, a relation to something more than social needs. They have an influence upon the potentiality of good in a deeper sense, upon the possibility of fuller realization of the soul as above and beyond both self and society. Every choice affects the progress of the soul towards freedom ; and every chosen act has consequences which react upon the condition of the self as the body or garment of the soul. Whatever John Smith, or any society of John Smiths, does of deliberate choice is not only a result of some relation of soul to self, but also directly modifies that relation, and may indirectly modify the relation in the case of any number of fellow-socii. And this is what we mean when we say, in our rather loose language, that all deliberate actions are both the outcome of character, and react upon character.

This common-sense attitude is indisputable. It is also strictly true ; and it is really involved in the doctrine of self and soul upon which I have insisted. We described the self as the whole equipment of physical and mental powers and propensities, derived from nature and modified by social influences, with

which each of us works as a human being. To express the relation of this self to the soul, we may describe it also, though only by metaphor and therefore dangerously, as the living garment or case of the soul, from and through which the soul has eventually to break away. But meanwhile the soul is changing the case from within, and social life is perpetually moulding it from without. And the resulting qualities of the case, to which we apply the term "character," are the result of both the internal and the external fashioning.

From this two consequences follow. First, with reference to the good man's attitude to all external (social) happenings. Common-sense is rightly offended if we suggest that the utterly good man, knowing that all these happenings are unreel, will therefore treat them as unworthy of any great attention. The obvious importance of social life stamps as wrong any attempt to picture the perfect individual as a Gallio, even though he has the excuse of being also a religious mystic. Yet we may assert that the good man knows that no social events need necessarily be important to any of us. Anybody's shell may have been brought so completely under the dominance of the soul that no external event will matter. But social events, like physical, are usually of considerable importance to all of us normal people; and for the sufficiently good reason that they do or may, in degree and manner differing with our progress, harden or soften the shell of self, so making it a worse or better case for the soul. *Therefore*, the good man cares about them, not only as a citizen or fellow-self, but as a fellow-soul. Previously we saw that he must care, in so far as

the duty of rendering to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's laid upon him the citizen-duty of giving his full service of social devotion to his society. But now we see the further reason: the social services are also the "things that are God's."

In the second place, we now reach a satisfactory explanation of the time-honoured difficulty connected with "character." This word, like others already noticed, confuses very different things. Sometimes it is used to express merely those qualities of the self which are definitely social products, such as the accepted habits of action of the social person. Sometimes it is applied to those qualities of the self which are the joint product of social influences and of the soul's striving. Sometimes, again, it is made to include those qualities which, manifested through the self, are really the true expression of the soul's nature. Now character of the first, and lowest, order includes a very great deal of the dispositions and tendencies of all of us. Character of the second kind applies to the comparatively small part of our disposition which we have acquired as a result of our conscious willings. And character of the third, and highest, order is the rare emanation of the true soul dominating its shell completely. And this last kind of character, appearing very intermittently in good people, is the permanent possession only of the saint.

In our ordinary talk about character, these very different elements are not distinguished. The word covers all the meanings noted; and many of the assertions we make about character are wholly true, partly true, or wholly false, according as one meaning or another

predominates. Take, for instance, the controversy always raging over the real influence which ought to be assigned to social (external) conditions upon character, in which the one side asserts that character is all-important and circumstances more or less negligible, while the other asserts that the social conditioning is supremely important, because it is actually the moulder of character. It is clear that, in so far as we are thinking of character in the first of the three senses explained, all external changes *are* of supreme importance. The self which is being formed unconsciously (as in the case of a young child) into this or that kind of social person, with this or that kind of qualities and social disposition, follows in its development the line of least resistance. Place it in a den of thieves or in a virtuous family, and its character in this sense will vary accordingly.* It is true that no one except a very young child is thus wholly at the mercy of the environment. But all of us, so far as our selves and their activities are habitual, are similarly influenced in the development of our "character" by the external suggestions and pressures. If, on the other hand, we take character in the third sense defined, it is equally true that circumstances do not matter at all. The only influence which counts is that of the soul—or of some power working through the soul. And, finally, if we are considering character as a joint product, in which the influence of the social environment is combined with that of the internal guiding power, then it is clear that external social changes diminish in importance just in proportion as

* Subject, of course, to the influence of inherited tendencies.

the true individual is really awake in us ; but they never cease to be of *some* importance until the wholly soul-governed man is reached—the completely religious man, or the true philosopher.

Thus the old individualist dogma, "character and not circumstance matters," is seen to be a dogma of varying degrees of truth and falsity according to the application, or the meaning of "character" involved. It is very untrue of most of us, entirely true only of the very best. In most of us, all the qualities of the self or person are always under the influence of circumstances, though never wholly so, after we have grown up, on the assumption that the soul is never quite asleep, or that no sane human being is quite without the will to be saved. The individualist principle is one which we should like to believe is true of us all. It is only really true of our idealized "character."

Again, we can now see a similar confusion underlying the common assertion that "You can never make people virtuous by Act of Parliament." If by virtue we mean the good qualities of the social person, then the assertion is foolishly paradoxical and misleading. Society's laws, like all its actions, help to form the qualities of the social self, by means of suggestion, increase or decrease of opportunity, and all the means which combine to form habit and the customary preference for "right" social conduct which usually grows out of "right" habit. Plato saw this clearly enough ; hence his elaborate arrangements for the unconscious education of the young by the quiet and persistent influence of a healthy social environment.

But the assertion in question is neither paradoxical nor misleading, *if* by virtue we mean the submission of self to soul, or the full dominance of the soul's will over its shell. This kind of virtue springs from within, or at any rate, comes through the soul that is within. It is not due to habit, nor is it a direct result of social moulding. The true soul chooses or wills it; and that is all. Right habit prepares the way, if you like; but the soul must make the choice.

Yet again, we find a way of escape from many of the difficulties of moral judgment passed upon our fellow-citizens. We are inclined to say of the drunkard, "He could be sober if he chose," just as we sometimes say of the unemployed, "They might be in steady work if they were good enough." And in all such judgments we imply very definitely that they have only themselves to blame. Of course; it is perfectly true—*if* we regard them as selves in whom the soul is working constantly through the medium of a life over which they have full control. But it is very emphatically *not* true, if we regard them as normal social selves, qualified and limited and moulded in this way and that by the social medium and by the opportunities it affords for this or that kind of growth. As such, they may or may not be relatively good in whatever sense society chooses to give to the word,—society fixing both the content of qualities requisite for "goodness," and also the standard which must be reached in order to deserve the name. And both these vary with time and place and social need. In the matter of sobriety, the required standard is now placed much higher than it used to be; but the

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attainment of that standard by any one depends upon a complex of causes in which natural tendencies and social controls figure largely. It may be *wise* to proclaim the principle that the drunkard has only himself to blame; but it certainly is not fair. Once more we find that the individualist is applying to ordinary social selves the verdicts which are only true of the very rare individual who has risen above circumstance; his judgments are only fully applicable to our idealized selves. This is at once the virtue and the defect of individualism: it assumes that we have realized our true power very much more than most of us have—a most salutary assumption, but never a just one. And perhaps, in the case of the unemployed man, the injustice is too great to be balanced by the salutariness. For in this case the standard of general capacity, moral or mental or physical, below which the man falls, is not an established or recognized standard at all, and varies with the state of trade, just as much as a standard of immunity from disease must vary with the prevalence or absence of disease germs. No one is a healthy man in a bad malarial district; no one is “good enough” to be employed in Lancashire during a cotton famine.

We may now, in the light of the distinctions drawn, sum up the position reached in regard to the freedom of the individual. The matter at first seems simple: the freedom of the true individual is absolute; that of the social person is wholly relative to society's needs and demands, which are as binding upon him as nature's demands are upon the natural man. But

the question becomes more complex when we remember that each member of society is also a self, and as such belongs to the true individual, as his necessary instrument, as well as to society. This dual ownership, if we may use the term, is the root of all the difficulties. Which owner has the prior claim or right? And to what extent or in reference to what activities? The old assertion of "natural rights," misleading as the term was, seemed to point to a recognition of the fact that part at least of the self's activities must be left wholly to the control of the individual. We have already seen that this is the case, certainly so far as the non-social activities are concerned. And we may now state the position in this way *Qua* social person, the self is entirely subordinate to the society of persons from whom all rights are derived, and to whom also its personality is chiefly due. But the self is, as we have seen, wider than the social person; and as such has "rights," or rather, has freedom, for it belongs to and is at the disposal of its individual owner. As a social person, I will agree to the principle that all my life is at the disposal of my State. But as more than a social person, I refuse to let the State dispose of me or of my activities at all.

This position is quite satisfactory to those whom I should venture to call true individualists, for they have the certainty that their real life cannot be touched by any social interference. It would not satisfy many ordinary individualists, especially those of the Herbert Spencer type. But it must be remembered that the

Spencerian theory, so far as it is a theory of the social organism, limits us to a subordination of individual to society very analogous to the subordination of cell to body ; and it is little wonder that its exponents should, however inconsistently, protest against the "slavery" implied in such a conception. Such a theory does not reach the conception of society as a system of rights and duties tending always towards the ethical stage ; and therefore it does not lead us to the higher *social* element of consent and purposive agreement upon which social subordination is founded. An organism is not a person to whom duty can be willingly owed and rendered ; submission to it must mean the submission of a cell or a slave.

NOTE.—Common usage of words makes it quite inevitable that the word *individual* should be used in the general sense which includes social units or social persons and separate selves. I have, therefore, made no attempt in other chapters to restrict its use to the peculiar meaning attached to it in this chapter. Whenever it is necessary to emphasize the distinction, I have used the term "*true individual*."

CHAPTER IX

THE REAL PURPOSE OF THE SOCIAL PROCESS; AND THE TESTS OF THE REFORMER'S AIMS AND METHODS

THE last chapter has carried us into a region of speculation very far removed from any accepted social philosophy. Yet it has a vital connexion with our main issue. We need not be afraid now to make an admission which has gradually been forcing itself upon us, namely, that the detailed content of all social aims is determined by the natural process by which felt or imagined need gives rise to various suggestions of change, which in turn are elaborated by individuals in the direction fixed for them by the prejudices which each has inherited or acquired, by the bias which each has derived from his or her partial contact with social life, and by the one-sided feelings and thoughts which make up the social equipment of every normal citizen. These detailed aims, thus elaborated into policies by individuals or groups of individuals, are then offered to society to choose or reject. By a kind of instinctive process the social impulse does at last attach itself to some one

policy, which thus becomes, for the time being, the expression of the social purpose—with whatever modifications may be introduced, as the play of a wider range of feeling, prejudice, and interest is brought to bear upon it.

Not a very intelligent procedure, you say, nor very dignified for a society of thinking, reasonable beings? By no means; it would be pleasanter to believe that we thought out our aims and policies, as most of us actually imagine that we do. But I must ask to be allowed to offend the vanity of politicians and reformers and ordinary citizens by dogmatically asserting, for the moment, that their thought-out policies are *not* reasonable, and to leave the further proof to a later section. At present I only claim to have shown that they are not inspired, but determined by the natural processes which obtain among ordinary human beings. We have not discovered any test of the utility or appropriateness of aim or policy; it can never be proved to be best, or even advantageous; all we can say is that the fact that the general social impulse has fastened upon it, guided by the consciousness of a particular need, is *prima facie* evidence of its appropriateness in relation to that need, and of its harmony with other accepted aims.

But what we *may* claim to have discovered is this: a criterion or test of the *worth* of any social aim or policy, regarded as a purposive striving after a true end. For the analysis of the social person, the self, and the soul, has entitled us to assert that no aim is true which is not really spiritual—that is,

which is not consciously directed to bringing nearer the attainment of the only absolutely good end, the realization of the true individual as supreme over both society and self. This position we may now make clearer.

When, at the beginning of our inquiry, we adopted the sociological point of view, we thereby committed ourselves to the investigation of the principal causes and conditions of social development, or of the influences which help to determine the march of social events and to modify the social structure, in such a way as to affect the welfare of society as such. And this is the sole province of the sociologist. His interest is centred in society and its progress; and in that of the social units only so far as they are members of society. But the social philosopher is legitimately interested in the individual social members as ends in themselves; and the social process chiefly interests him because of its effect upon the development of the individual rather than upon the development of society. We are now able to go a step further than this. If with the social philosopher's view we combine the conceptions outlined in the last chapter, we at once find that the social process has acquired a new significance. It is supremely important by reason of its constant effect upon the moulding and fashioning of the selves which are both the instruments and the expressions of the true individual. In other words, the importance of the social process is found to lie, not in its social effects, not even in its moral effects in the ordinary sense, but in its supra-social reactions; in its indirect effects, that is, upon

the progress of the individual soul. And therefore the part we play as social reformers, or conscious guiders of the social process, is of importance, not because it improves the Great Being, social humanity, or its members as social persons, but because it quickens the process of that self-development which is essential to the realization of the true individual. This development of the self is not, of course, the end, any more than is social welfare or the improvement of social morality. But it is a necessary means to the one supreme end—the liberation and realized power of the true individual.

Thus, the real reformer's work is always a religious work, though seldom recognized as such by others or even by himself. And the test of the real reformer lies in this : is the goal towards which he is consciously striving the true end of individual realization, or something lower than this? Is he working to make the social units better temples for souls, or only better material for social life and social happiness? Apply this test to many forms of social reform, and we find an answer to the questions, "Why is it that many of the most ardent social reformers seem to miss the spirit of reform? Why do so many attractive programmes seem so materialistic and uninspiring?"

One or two examples will make this clear. We may feel the fullest agreement with the arguments and pleadings of the eugenicist, who is bent upon improving the health of the national stock, and of the separate social members. The improvement is obviously important, and is sorely needed, just as it is important

and necessary for me to find a remedy for any physical ailment from which I may suffer. But it does not touch the true end ; and—herein lies the danger—concentration upon this improvement may even lead to neglect of the true end, exactly as concentration upon the health of the body may be the very worst obstacle to the real progress of the individual. The eugenicist does not get beyond the consideration of the social cells, and their well-being as part of society or as ordinary social persons. He is aiming only at making them healthier material for the social process to work with, endowed with increased capacities for personal enjoyment, appreciation, or achievement. But it is very difficult to concentrate attention upon health, and the capacities it gives, as an end, without making it *the* end ; and *that* is materialism.

So, again, we may feel complete sympathy with the aims of many Socialists ; perhaps, too, with *their* arguments and pleadings. They are bent upon lessening the injustices of social life, and opening for all the opportunities of a satisfactory human existence ; upon diminishing or abolishing the poverty which stunts and starves all human capacities, and upon increasing for all the poor the power to do and to enjoy. There is usually no selfishness in the aim ; the Socialists who work hardest to bring about the prevention of destitution and the abolition of poverty are not themselves either destitute or poor. And yet the aim seems to miss the mark. For we are not here in order to be well off : the purpose of our social life is not to increase, for ourselves or even for others, the realization of

well-being, or the capacity for fuller appreciation, or the opportunities for completer satisfaction. It is a good thing, no doubt, to be better off and happier, just as it is a good thing to be healthier ; but only as a means to something beyond both happiness and health.

But both the Socialist and eugenist will by this time have become scornfully impatient. Is not the realization of their aims the essential condition of the attainment of any other ends ? Filth, poverty, misery, and disease—are these the friends of virtue, or are they the sure breeders of vice ? Till they are put away, what progress can come ? I hope I am not so foolish as to dispute the verdict of common-sense in these things. *Of course*, eugenist and Socialist are working for good things ; but their aims will only satisfy the test of goodness if they are linked to something very different. We will and must work to make any one healthier—not in order that he may be a more efficient person, or a more fully satisfied self, but in order that he may be better equipped to be a victor in the fight against the world, the flesh, and the devil. We will and must work to lessen any one's poverty—so far as that poverty depresses the human being down to the level of the slave who cannot hold the strings of his own life in his own hands. We will join forces with the crusaders against destitution and inherited feebleness, not in order to make the bodies of our neighbours better fed, or their faculties more efficient, or themselves and their community more successful and prosperous ; but because the kind of poverty and inherited weakness which we see in them works like a poison against the better life

of all, preventing men and women from realizing that they *are* spiritual beings and not only human, blinding them to the true purposes of life and of its difficulties, forcing their thoughts to dwell wholly upon their chains and limitations, with no vision of the deliverance which might be within their grasp. And mark how the conception of the *causes* to be attacked must change with this change of motive. The misery of dire poverty is hateful, not only because its effects are paralyzing, but because its real causes are poisonous too. It is not the faulty organization of the labour market or the clumsy and antiquated system of relief that chiefly matters, but the selfishness which makes the labour market faulty, the apathy which keeps relief inept. The degeneracy of a badly bred population is hateful, not only because it piles up suffering for the future, but because it springs chiefly from present neglect and lust. It is not the bad mating and thoughtless selection of the future parents which chiefly matter; but the vice which makes many parents bad, the self-indulgence which destroys the sense of parenthood's responsibilities.

Are we drawing too subtle a distinction here? Ought we not to rest content with the good work done for a suffering humanity under the motives of disinterested sympathy, pity, and affection? Need we ask anything more of the reformer than that he should care for his neighbour and consider the poor, and try to make their lives happier, brighter, fuller, and worthier of human beings? To questions put in this form we can give but one answer: we neither expect nor desire to supersede the aim and motives of the good citizen

unselfishly striving to help his fellow-citizens to better things. From his actions, as quite surely from his goodwill, the deeper result will certainly follow ; the spirit of sacrifice, and therefore the spirit that is not of self, goes with all such reform—and goes beyond it. But the difference of conception of social evils on which I have insisted rests upon a distinction which is neither unimportant nor over-subtle. Both the methods and the results of reform differ enormously according as we think of an evil as merely a preventible barrier to increased satisfaction, or as a barrier to the attainment of a good life ; and the distinction underlying the difference is that between the conception of ourselves as beings capable of enjoyment and the conception of ourselves as instruments capable of perfection.

If the examples I have taken have failed to make this clear, let me take one other in which there is no possibility of confusion. The institution of marriage is considered imperfect. There is much unhappiness in many married lives ; incompatible temperaments are found to have yoked themselves together ; constant discord takes the place of mutual affection ; or open rupture occurs, one partner or the other giving unforgivable offence by bad conduct or bad habits. In any case, the joy which should be the permanent possession of husbands and wives, and the natural result of their union, disappears beyond recovery, and worry, pain, and hatred take its place. An obvious evil, this ; how shall it be met ? By the obvious remedy, say many reformers, of altering the conditions upon which the institution of marriage rests. Make escape from the evil easier ; make

it possible for discordant unions to be dissolved, and for the people who are made wretched by them to find in other unions, or in none, the happiness they have missed in the one which has failed.

Now, quite apart from the question of whether easier divorce would be a good thing or a bad, apart too from countless social considerations affecting the issue, it is certain that the attitude here indicated is vitiated by the wrong conception of purpose or end for which the institution of marriage exists. Passing by the various social ends which have been noticed in previous chapters, we can now assert boldly that marriage, like every other human relationship, has a supreme purpose as a means of training, disciplining, and developing the self out of its self-hood. It is perhaps more valuable than any other relationship, because it is better fitted for this purpose than any other; and its fitness rests in great measure upon its absolute permanence, upon the crude fact that there is no easy way of escape from its difficulties, that the bed made by choice must be lain upon of necessity, that the partner chosen must be made partner, even though the imagined possibility of human joy must be permanently abandoned in this case or in that. Shall we make it easier to dissolve the relationship and so start again with new hope in pursuit of the joy we have missed? The device is too easy to be the right one; and such a device, adopted with such a motive, resting upon such a conception of purpose, is foredoomed to failure. Not, however, chiefly because the will o' the wisp which the disappointed husband or wife dreams of will never be caught, but because the conversion of

marriage into a device for catching it means robbing the relationship of its highest purpose.

But let me remark emphatically that this conception does not settle the matter, even for the philosopher. No one point of view can do this, not even the highest. It is very possible that the laws of divorce do need alteration. Just as there are conditions of poverty which must be regarded as absolute barriers to the true development of normal human beings, so there are conditions of married life which, for any one short of a saint, may kill the beginnings of effort in the husband or wife who is yoked to an intolerable mate. And the social considerations of health and example, of effects upon children and the general good of the community, may also be decisive in numerous cases. No iron rule can be framed. Only absolute certainty belongs to the definition of the necessary point of view from which, first of all, the problem must be approached.

It must be remarked also that, although we may be said to be treating the subject from a standpoint which is really religious, we are not, as social philosophers, concerned with the attitude of many religious people who find in the authoritative law of their Church a final answer to the problem. The philosopher may not fall back upon any authority—even that of a Church—though he may feel certain that the Church's law is really based upon that very conception of the purpose of the relationship which he too has found to be decisive wherever it can be clearly applied.

One other misconception must be guarded against here. I may be accused of going to the ridiculous

extreme of disregarding altogether the value of simple human happiness as a concomitant of our human activities ; indeed I can almost hear the taunt :—Because thou art virtuous (or pretending to be), shall there be no more cakes and ale ? But this is really a misconception. I might even plead that I only require the utilitarian to admit, as J. S. Mill did, that the curious thing about happiness as an end is that if we aim at it we most certainly miss it. I do *not* minimize the importance of happiness : I simply assert that happiness in the sense of the satisfaction of the self is, and will always be, a delusion ; and that no more permanent kind of happiness is open to us except as a result of following a higher aim. That is why I maintain that it is useless to base any reform upon the desire to make ourselves and our society happier or more fully satisfied. True reform must rest upon an ideal ; no end can be really an ideal unless it carries us beyond the self and its desires and satisfactions. But true reform will always make both us and our community happier in a different sense : not by cutting down obstacles in the way of our easier satisfaction as selves, but by leading us up to the power of so ordering our selves and their desires for satisfaction as that there shall no longer be any *dissatisfaction* to be unhappy about.

Let us pass on to a simpler question, concerning, not the test of the worth of our policies or *aims*, but rather the test of our *methods* as reformers. The constant difficulty which meets us is the fear lest we may be "weakening responsibility," or the sense of responsibility, among the people whom we wish to help. If we take

the trouble to analyse the meaning of the responsibility which we are not to weaken, we shall find, as we found in the case of "character," that the word has more than one meaning. It implies, in the first place, answerability to society for the performance of certain duties which are demanded or expected of us as social members. Thus, "parental responsibility" denotes our answerability to our society for the performance of those duties to our children which society insists upon. The content of the duties for the performance of which we are answerable is determined by society. This content is never finally fixed; we may even go further and say that it is not supremely important what the content is, or rather, that the fixing of this or that content is a matter of expediency, and does not rest upon any ultimate principle. It does not greatly matter whether society lays upon me the duty of cleaning my own doorstep, or performs that particular operation for me. It does not greatly matter whether society includes in "parental responsibility" the duty of teaching children their lessons, or takes that particular duty out of the parent's hands, and performs it for him. That is to say, society will and must define the scope of our responsibility as it thinks most expedient, for our good and the good of all.

But to rest content with this meaning of responsibility would clearly leave the reformer in a dangerous position. It gives no guiding principle at all, but only the test of expediency or utility, which we have seen again and again is nothing more than the test of what we *imagine* will be most expedient. If any would-be

reformers assert that it is expedient to relieve the poorer parents of the duty of feeding or clothing or nursing their children, we may disagree vehemently, but we have no answer to make except the very unconvincing assertion that we do not think so. The argument thus becomes a mere contest of competing ideas of expediency, one party asserting their belief that the community will be healthier and happier if the majority of children are treated as children of the State, and uniformly fed and cared for in accordance with a fair standard of nurture, the other side asserting their conviction that such a proceeding will ruin both society and its individual members. But the convictions of the latter will not convince their opponents. They cannot deny that deficient nourishment and general neglect are very potent causes of social degeneracy; they cannot deny (and this is more important) that the conditions of economic pressure make it increasingly difficult for many poor parents, not to keep their children, but to keep them up to the rising standard required, and that therefore many parents are overburdened and depressed, and so become apathetic; while if they assert that the more the community does for people the slacker and lazier they become, the assertion is met by a point-blank denial, backed by references to recent history which it is not easy to get over. Both sides are using the same test—the imagined utility or benefit of the society and of the social persons composing it; and neither side ever convinces the other, for the simple reason that our conceptions of utility are not logical at all, but the outcome of our

peculiar prejudices, inherited and acquired, of our private or class interests, of our undigested experience of a little corner of the whole social life.

Now, in most political issues, this clash of competing "convictions" is all the process there is to decide the matter. We have seen, however, that the worth of a reformer's aim may be tested by the application of a spiritual principle which is always decisive; we are satisfied only if the aim proposed harmonizes with the conception of the social process as a means to a supreme spiritual end. May we not also find a similar principle applicable as a test to the *method* of reform, especially in so far as it alters the content of the citizen's responsibility?

There undoubtedly is such a test, though not easy to apply with any sureness. We have admitted that the *content* of our social duty is not of supreme importance. It may at one time include, at another disregard, this or that particular set of actions; at one time I may be responsible for cleaning my own bit of pavement, at another the local authority may do this for me. But what *is* of supreme importance is that the content of each individual's duty should never grow less, but always increase; and this is chiefly because responsibility implies something higher than answerability to society, and is relative to a good far transcending social or personal utility. It implies also answerability of the self to its true owner—which is not society; we may call it answerability to the Good, if we wish, or answerability to the true individual whose instrument the self is. This answerability, with

its range of duties, has, of course, no limits ; and self-progress involves, obviously, that the range and content of recognized and accepted duty shall continually grow greater. If we are to grow, we must grow in *dutifulness* ; there is no other condition of progress. More and more actions and activities must be brought under the sphere of duty ; our range of choice—the amount of “ open space ” for our wills—must constantly expand and not contract. *Therefore*, though it matters little what particular duties society thinks fit to emphasize at any given time, it matters much whether society makes fewer or more demands upon us, expects of us less or more. For the content of the duty of the self to the good, though not necessarily social, is bound to include and consist of social actions so far as we are necessarily members of society, finding in social life our training ground. Even the saint cannot escape that condition, though for him the social duties will form but a small part of the whole. For most of us, almost the whole of our dutifulness must find expression in the performance of social duties ; and consequently the continual expansion of the range of these social duties is the essential condition of our growth.

Is the test applicable to our difficulties concerning the methods of reform ? Not easily nor with any definiteness ; the findings of philosophy, like the deepest teachings of religion, are the hardest things in the world to apply in detail, though their general application is so clear. But we may safely take up this attitude : if the impulse of the community leads it to relieve the poorer classes of any particular duty—

well, so be it. The aged poor may be pensioned, the children of the poor doctored or clothed or fed. In one case the responsibility of sons and daughters is diminished, in the other, that of fathers and mothers. This diminution of the content of duty is, by itself, wholly bad. But it is not necessarily bad at all, *if* it is accompanied by increased responsibility in other directions, by increased demands for the performance of duties of other kinds. Some adult citizens are relieved of a financial burden and an economic duty: that tells us little or nothing; we must ask further, What new and greater duties are demanded of them? Or has the content of their recognized duty already grown insensibly in such a way that, even without the specific duty of supporting aged parents and buying food for dependent children, they have greater obligations to fulfil than their predecessors had? Can we reasonably say that the poor who are relieved of one burden are already shouldering others, of a different kind perhaps, but requiring greater, not less, effort and self-control? Are they striving to act up to a higher standard of care and consideration, of self-denial and affection, than a generation ago? A progressive community does undoubtedly demand more of parents in countless ways as the general standard of social morality and social welfare rises; but is the mass of the population responding to the new demands, and learning to fulfil the new requirements? These are difficult and delicate questions to answer; but in no other way can we place the dispute upon a basis of real principle, and apply a sure test of the safety or danger of the methods advocated.

And, once again, the test is not decisive, because the answer to the questions must needs vary according to each one's experience of his own or other classes' conditions, according to each one's estimate of his own or other people's capacity and character. And the answer will vary, too, with our varying conceptions of the significance of admitted social changes. It is possible to urge that a civilized community cannot help applying to its social complexities the organized methods which have proved so effective in all the specialized activities of its life. And further, the certain discovery, of *how* various evils can be treated effectually, forces upon the society (as a matter of simple common-sense) the necessity of applying the discovered treatment in the most effectual way—that is, universally, compulsorily, and, if need be, gratuitously. No community can have placed in its hands a sure preventive of small-pox (or what is believed to be such), without very soon insisting upon universal vaccination. No community can discover the sure connexion between simple ignorance and general inefficiency, without very soon insisting upon universal education. The discovery of the direct connexion between bad drains and disease leaves a city or a nation no alternative but to organize a general system of sanitation. To leave the application of the treatment to the choice of each individual or family would seem to be a perverse refusal to utilize the remedy within our reach. And if the medical specialist or any other specialist informs us authoritatively that this or that remedy will produce this or that desired improvement

of health or welfare, then it is difficult to avoid the adoption of the measure recommended as part of that universal provision of the conditions of well-being which every civilized community is constantly increasing. Observe, too, that this process is quickened by the growth of the knowledge of the evils to be remedied. The statistician is perpetually universalizing the facts for the reformers and citizens; how can these in turn help universalizing the treatment necessary to meet the facts? The sociologist is perpetually bringing to light new sufferings for our sympathies to fasten upon, new causes of suffering for our ingenuity to prevent. How then can we expect the social brotherhood not to apply, under the influence of its newly aroused sympathy, the preventives which its growing ingenuity suggests, and to apply them, too, in the most effective way? Universalized treatment is thus the natural sequel to the accumulation of national statistics; Socialism naturally follows the sociologist,—Socialism, that is, in the sense of general communal action superseding much of the voluntary action or inaction of each separate individual. And individualism is gradually crowded out by the pressure of new faith in organization, new discoveries of remedies for evils, new knowledge of the extent of suffering, new sympathy with the sufferers, new analysis of causes, new devices of prevention, and perhaps most of all, by the force of a new *closeness* of the social tissue.

Such is the interpretation of the march of events by which many would defend the methods of reform which we have been examining. The philosopher can do no

more than listen with interest to the interpretation—as to the counter-interpretation of the individualist. For the latter will maintain that the socialistic tendency, whose justification we have stated, is nothing better than a weak yielding to the line of least resistance. *Of course* it is easier to deal with a wide-spread want by the simple device of filling up the void than by the difficult method of treating each case of want as a separate problem calling for separate attention. And the whole case turns upon a vicious analogy. Small-pox and typhus and illiteracy are comparatively simple evils, traceable always to simple causes. But poverty and misery are not simple, and their causes are as infinitely varied as are the springs of human conduct. You can sanitize the simpler evils out of existence by the universal application of specific preventives. But you can no more sanitize misery away than you can cure sin by bottles of medicine. No two cases are really alike, in spite of all the statisticians' universalizing. Every case of typhus is due to the same specific virus. But every case of misery is due to a combination of innumerable viruses, never twice the same. No one but the shallowest of shallow Socialists would imagine that his analysis has even brought him within sight of the causes, when he asserts that want of the means to live is the one universal evil to which misery is due. We are misled by the terms we use, such as under-feeding or physical inefficiency. They are convenient names to describe evils of which the general manifestations and effects are the same everywhere. But the evils spring from a myriad different roots, moral,

physical, and mental, personal, social, and industrial. And the reformer who disregards the distinction is as dangerous as a quack physician, who applies a single panacea to all kinds of undiagnosed complaints. The social ailments will be aggravated, not cured ; and the real roots of the social maladies will continue to grow unchecked.

Let the community decide the controversy ; no one else can. The social philosopher, at any rate, is not a dogmatic social theorist who can confidently judge between rival policies. I dare not even say that the individualist position harmonizes more closely than the socialist's with the basis of principle which I have claimed to be fundamental. It is possible that the socialism which attacks the injustice and callousness of the comfortable classes, but rather overlooks the defects of the uncomfortable, is quite as near to the spiritual ideal as the individualism which, while rather condoning the materialism of the well-to-do, analyses very accurately the shortcomings of the poor. Just as there is much socialism which seems to be entirely materialistic, so there is much individualism which treats the individual more as a serviceable industrial unit than as a living and struggling soul. The general socialism which *does* bear in mind the spiritual growth, is far better than the individualism which does not travel far beyond a consideration of the value of certain economic virtues—not because these are unimportant, but because, being only symptoms of a deeper virtue, they are treated as valuable in themselves. And the individualism which

does care most for the right development of each individual self, is much nearer the mark than the socialism which aims at regimenting society into a condition of equable comfort.

The social politician may extract what guidance he can from these platitudes. It is not the philosopher's business to decide the issue for him. And what right have I, the mere social philosopher, to carp at the socialist with his impulse for progress, or at the individualist with his instinct of danger? Each is a necessary factor in the whole process of reform; each represents a part of the whole vital impulse of society towards a better state of itself.

We have, in this chapter, established the two principles which we chiefly need: one furnishes a test of the quality or worth of the aim of any social policy; the other a test of the safety of its methods. The *aim* is entirely worthy only when the policy of reform is consciously directed towards such alteration of social conditions as will make of social life and its relationships a better training ground for the development of selves as the servants and instruments of the true individual. The *methods* are entirely satisfactory only when the reform is brought about by or brings with it a widening of the field of choice and will for all the agents affected by it—when it makes possible and necessary a greater consciousness of responsibility, and gives fuller content to the conception of duty. We thus see the tremendous validity of the plea about "weakening responsibility," although this is usually misunderstood. The question which

matters is not "What particular responsibilities shall be insisted upon?" but "How far is the consciousness of duty increased?" Any specific social duty imposed upon us may, with the change of social need, be taken out of the individual's hands. That is immaterial. Indeed we may safely affirm that the present content of social duty is bound to change as social life rises from one level to another. It is only in a stationary society, such as a hive of bees, that the content of social duty remains fixed; and a stationary society may be very perfect, for bees, but is the antithesis of perfection for human beings. What *does* matter is that there shall be a fuller and fuller recognition of duty on the part of all citizens. If that condition is fulfilled, if the consciousness of responsibility is on the up-grade, then there need be no uneasiness about the effect of this or that "dangerous" method.

But the principles here outlined rest upon a conception of the individual as definitely supra-social. They are not reached by any consideration of the requirements of social welfare; society's needs are not the clue to them; although it may be very safely maintained that the observance of them is the ultimate condition of the attainment of any social welfare, and of the fulfilment of any of society's needs.

CHAPTER X

THE FINAL CRITERIA OF SOCIAL PROGRESS

WE owe it to the reader to answer two or three final questions. The tests of aim and method explained in the last chapter are admittedly difficult to apply, and in any case, they are not applicable to the detailed content of this or that policy or reform. Our ultimate aim may be the true one; our conception of the requirements of method may be right; but even so, a thousand alternative policies are left open to us. How are we to choose between them? It is not pretended that the details of reform are ever inspired or deduced from spiritual certainties: a Plato or a St. Augustine may be as far astray in them as a Bellamy or a Blatchford. Where then shall we look for guidance? What is the validity of our detailed social judgments? On what foundation do our decisions rest? Must we take our stand on the slippery basis of groping impulse and blind prejudice? Or may we hope for the firmer foundation of knowledge? Or are we to fall back upon simple faith?

The questions now at issue have two aspects: first, How are the individual's judgments and decisions

formed, and what are they worth? and secondly, How are society's judgments and decisions formed, and what is the guarantee of their correctness? These two aspects cannot be kept quite separate; but we may with advantage begin by considering them separately.

All our individual judgments are clearly related to our general conceptions of the significance and value of the various component parts of our social life. Whenever we are called upon to give an opinion upon any social proposal—any suggested reform or policy—we at once set about connecting the proposal with sundry elements of our social life—this or that activity or relationship or institution or mode of development or of satisfaction—noting its probable effects upon these, and then passing judgment upon it. We may go through short or long processes of argument, use few or many steps in tracing the connexion which we wish to establish, (these will vary with our thoughtfulness and our concentration upon the question in hand); but as soon as the connexion is established, our judgment of praise or blame, of approval or disapproval, follows at once. And what really determines the judgment is the estimate we hold of the *value* of the various activities, relationships, and other elements of our life which we think will be affected by the proposal. Thus the really decisive factor is, for all of us, the general scheme of values which we possess—our estimate of the worth of all the different elements in our life.

But, as we have seen, our social conceptions and

estimates always begin in the form of accepted, customary, unanalysed opinions and preferences which we inherit or absorb as we live; they are not, at first, systems of thought or orderly schemes of value at all, but rather crude blocks of sentiment, of given feeling and prejudice. Further, we must admit that few people in any society pass very far beyond this early stage. We are most of us sentimentalists, always jumping to conclusions in the direction in which we are impelled by our unanalysed and unharmonized feelings and biases. And as most societies are chiefly composed of people who are neither sociologists nor social philosophers, it would seem to follow that the decisions of any democracy can be nothing more than the outcome of innumerable competing masses of unenlightened prejudice.

Let us note, however, that, even if this is a correct account, we are not therefore justified in dismissing such decisions as either futile or dangerous. The fact that any judgment only rests upon a basis of acquired or inherited sentiment and bias by no means implies that it is valueless. Very far from it: the mass of sentiment which impels me in this direction or in that is a result of my own and my predecessors' experience, the outcome of the constant working of the facts of life upon my and their consciousness or subconsciousness. Its promptings are thus an index to something *real*, vital, and valuable, far more so than is expressed by calling it a mere mass of prejudice or sentiment. And a society mainly composed of such people, reaching its conclusions by appeal to such masses of sentiment, is not therefore incapable of sensible decision. On the

contrary, its decisions are, at any rate, indicative of its felt needs, and are the resultant of its general experience of life.

But this would be an unfair account of the decisions of any society which has reached the stage of democratic government. Every democracy contains at least a sprinkling of people who think ; people such as men of science or social specialists or even philosophers, who have reached the rational stage, have analysed their masses of feeling into their component parts, and rebuilt their social ideas and estimates into an ordered system in accordance with the general facts of social life. Moreover, in even a newspaper-reading community every citizen is continually revising and correcting his estimates under the instruction of some writers who have reached this rational stage ; and the social decisions are thus always influenced, if not largely determined, by the knowledge which presumably supersedes mere prejudice in the case of the thinkers who have reached the rational stage. The question, then, which we must decide is this : Is the really wise citizen's judgment rational ? Can he claim that it is founded upon knowledge, or does he too depend upon the promptings of feeling ?

Now the wisest man's system of social conceptions, ideas, and estimates, is relative to three different things. First, it has an obvious connexion with the actual social system, which he interprets as best he can. In this way his conceptions are linked to fact. Secondly, his system is based upon various rational systems of scientific knowledge, furnished by the different social

sciences with which he is acquainted. In this way his system is linked to science. And thirdly, it is relative to an ideal system which is peculiarly his own, inspired by his own vision of the good. In this way his system is linked to faith. He has therefore these three bases for his conceptions—fact, knowledge, and faith—surely a perfect foundation upon which to build a scheme of social estimates wherewith to illumine his judgment.

But let us look a little more closely at this combination of plausible elements. We speak of a basis of fact. The phrase has a reassuring sound, doubtless; yet it is totally misleading. The facts of life are so unlike any other facts that it is very doubtful whether we are justified by calling them by the same name. A birth, a death, a marriage, such are the simplest of social facts. But is not the birth of her firstborn a unique fact for every mother, and one of infinite and unanalysable significance? Is the death of any human being ever the same as the death of any other? The birth of a son, the death of a wife—these are your social facts; and they resemble the facts of science just so far as they are meaningless to us, the living and feeling agents. What they really mean as events is another matter. Their whole significance depends upon the chords of feelings touched in us, the myriad reactions upon our separate emotions and thoughts, and a host of personal and peculiar vital issues which no observation can schedule because no observation can reveal or analyse. But surely there are less intimate facts than these, the events and changes which do not touch us closely, and which we can at any rate weigh and

examine dispassionately? Yes; dispassionately, if you will. But what philosopher has ever considered them impartially? The whole quality of every social fact depends upon the interpretation which we give to it, the relation in which we place it to all the other facts of our experience. And our interpretation is biased from the start, just as our experience is a one-sided accumulation of prejudiced notes. The facts of astronomy, chemistry, or physics come to us pure and undefiled; we do not begin our observation of them with ingrained preferences and aversions. They are the same to you and to me and to any other intelligent person to whom they are properly pointed out. But no two human beings ever see the same social fact; for each one of us sees each fact of life through the lenses of his or her own peculiar experience, feeling, self-interest, moral conceptions, political prejudices, and desires and hopes and fears. In matters political, it is plainly impossible for Conservative and Liberal, brewer and temperance reformer, duke and Labour leader, Quaker and soldier, ever to see the same facts. Each sees them through a private glass—darkly. There *are* no “same facts” to be seen, by us who live and move and have our being among them and by means of them. We never reach the facts at all, but only our distorted, one-sided, self-interested interpretations of them. And in social matters the personal distortions are even greater, because the personal feelings come more insistently into play. I do not mean merely that none of us can ever hear of certain events or doings without at once clothing them with a quality dependent upon

feeling—thus converting a fact of cruelty into a “hateful” fact, a disaster into a “mournful” fact, and so on. That kind of simple qualification of facts is of course inevitable, and, in its simple and universal forms, need not be regarded as a distortion at all. But I refer to what every social worker is familiar with: the way in which every kind of social fact reaches us through a medium of prejudice. Sit on a charitable committee, and note how differently the different kinds of cases are “apperceived” by the different members. A case of a widow in distress immediately attracts the strong sympathy of the working-class members, while leaving others comparatively cold. The former see it as a case of peculiar suffering: every working man has an extremely soft heart for widows, doubtless because he feels (as the well-to-do do not) what widowhood involves for a poor woman. A case of distress partly aggravated through drink is at once prejudged by the strong temperance members: and so with other kinds of cases. One can almost say beforehand what the different members will see in the different kinds of case. Nor does this apply only to cases of distress. Note how the mention of a particular society will be received with execration in one circle, and with approval in another; how in some gatherings it is impossible to speak of a social phenomenon such as teetotallers or anti-vaccinationists, without rousing manifestations of derision or contempt; while in others, the same phenomenon will be received with the greatest respect. A good man ought to be the simplest of phenomena, seen in the same light by all. But he is not. In certain circles he is a

prig ; in others a " deep one " ; in others a spoil-sport. Is it not clear that in all our social observation, our apperceptive systems are shot through and through with bias and bigotry, and that we note and classify our facts, not with the help of candid vision, but by the touch of tentacles of prejudice ? Possibly we call the bias and prejudice our " principles " ; and I grant that the term is often the right one ; but the obscuration of our sight remains the same.

Does the philosopher escape these limitations ? We may assume that he is superior to the blinding of crude self-interest and of mere unthinking bigotry. But he can no more shed the scales of his life-bias than he can shed his physical senses. For him, as for ordinary mortals, there are no true social " facts."

If then the basis of fact turns out to be so much an illusion, it would seem to follow necessarily that the basis of scientific knowledge of social causation is illusory too. We cannot deduce scientific conclusions about any process if the requisite data cannot be observed impartially. This inference is, I admit, too abrupt and too crude to be accepted as it stands ; I have dealt with the question more fully elsewhere. But at least it is possible for us to assert that the scientific knowledge of social life or its departments is not the same as scientific knowledge of any other phenomena ; and therefore the basis of science which the wise man may claim for his social judgments is not as reassuring as the phrase implies.

What, then, of the basis of faith ? Is it more trustworthy ? It means the faith in his vision of a kingdom

of heaven upon earth, in the light of which every wise and good man interprets all social facts, and the whole system of facts which we call our social life. It is, at any rate, the most important of the bases upon which his decisions rest; it alone supplies finality to his verdicts, at least for him. But it is anything but rational; whatever else it is, it is not the reflection of the dry light of reason. For through all the wise man's work as a reasoning, harmonizing and idealizing social philosopher there runs his life-bias. The whole of his thought about life moves upon a track of feeling, and the thought-systems which he frames are connected with his likes and dislikes, his social and moral impulses and aversions, at every point. His thought moves whither his life-motives take it; and the result is no true thought-system at all. Compare it with one—such as the chemist's or the mechanic's thought-system,—and the difference is obvious. The latter takes always the same shape for every true student in the field; the former, like the facts from which it flows, is never twice the same. And the cause is clear. Each of us, wise or foolish, philosopher or plain man, is always an agent, and has to live. We are never simple knowers or learners or observers, but these things subject to the conditions of living and acting from moment to moment. That is to say, we are lovers and haters, likers and dislikers, all the time—because we are always social agents. And for the foundation of our social faiths and ideals we are brought back once again to feeling and impulse. The knowledge we claim as our basis is beyond our

grasp ; for knowledge demands indifference, while life refuses it.

What, then, is the guarantee of the validity of the wise man's judgment ? There is none ; except perhaps so far as a partial guarantee of its honesty and pertinence is afforded by his moral worth, and by the healthiness of the impulses which rule his life. And this is true of the social judgment also, whether it is determined more by the wise men or by the more numerous members of society who hardly even pretend to reason and think out their conclusions. There is no test of its validity except a moral one. If the determining mass of feeling is sound, if the life from which all the impulses flow is healthy, then the judgments and decisions are so far likely to be sound and healthy too. If otherwise, then they will probably be unsound and harmful—despite all the philosopher's warnings.

But the conclusion now reached, though really incontrovertible, is not yet satisfactory. I do not mean merely that it will not satisfy the political or social dogmatist (a class which includes us all at some time or other) ; for it will never do that. But I mean that it is not yet a satisfactory answer to the questions which we set out to answer in this chapter. Putting on one side for the moment the question of whether the social scientist or scientific sociologist may not be able to give us the authoritative guidance which we would like to have, it is obvious that we have not explained why it is that we all believe in the value of social argument, social observation, social researches, and as great an increase of social thought as we can get. Why, in fact,

should I think it worth while to write a long and laboured treatise on the subject of social philosophy, if, after all, the decisions both of society and of its individual members must to the end be the non-rational outcome of vital impulses which cannot be really enlightened by any amount of study?

These questions can be answered, and without inconsistency; but we must take a rather longer road to reach the answers. Let us begin by an analysis of what happens in the case of an individual life, faced by the necessity of making a decision as to its future conduct. A very simple instance will best serve our purpose. Suppose that all is not well with my health; some change seems to be called for, and a change of diet from meat-eating to vegetarianism is suggested. What happens? There is first, as in the case of most of us, the usual outburst of sheer prejudice or bias, which may quite possibly decide the matter for me at once. We have seen that such a decision is by no means futile or unreasonable, since the prejudice which dictates it indicates something instinctive, deep-seated, and vital, which is never without real value. But probably I wish to go further into the question, and so find a more rational basis for my decision. The next step is then to call to my aid any pertinent thought-systems which are available in reference to the matter. In this case I will learn what I can of the scientific systems of the dietetician and will frame a system for myself by the help of what I have learned. This system will then become the basis for my decision. This basis now consists of a would-be scientific system of values and

conceptions ; but even in so simple a matter as the one we are considering, the system is never really scientific (at any rate for the ordinary person), since we can none of us help selecting even our dietetic principles under the sway of our tastes and preferences. Nevertheless, it may decide the question for me ; I may even proclaim that I have "disproved" vegetarianism, and be perfectly satisfied with the rationality of the proof.

But, on the other hand, I may not yet feel satisfied ; I may still wait for something else. What is it ? Refusing the authoritative guidance of the dietetician, *

* I am almost afraid to incur the wrath of the orthodox dietetician or doctor by defending this disregard of his authority. If it was only a social science whose findings I refused to accept, no defence would be needed. Every self-respecting citizen considers himself entitled to set up his own opinion against the conclusions of the economist, for example, not only because many economists contradict one another, but simply because they are social scientists. And it is noteworthy that, if our example had been different, if, let us say, it had involved a question of building a house, then the authority of the scientific engineer would have been quite decisive in the matter, and I should not have defied it unless I had been mad. But the science of dietetics holds a position mid-way between an indisputable science such as mechanics, and a very disputable one, such as economics. So far as it lays down the law about my body only, just so far am I bound to accept its conclusions respectfully. But when it trenches on the general conduct of my life as a whole, then I am free to disregard its authority, because no science can decide, for me or for others, the conduct of life, whether individual or social. To put it plainly : if the medical expert tells me that this or that food affects the physical organs in this or that way, I accept his assertion, only remembering that even the physical organs are influenced in very queer ways by such things as faith or confidence, which scientific examination does not accurately touch. But if the

I refer the question to the test of my *whole* life-system (that queer compound of impulses, reasonings, and ideals), and am startled, and perhaps made uncomfortable, by the discovery that the matter is somehow connected with the moral elements in my system. I find that it is related to certain principles bearing upon the taking of life in any form, if it can be avoided ; or upon the rightness or wrongness of inflicting any unnecessary pain upon any fellow-creature. Now, if I find in my life-system any such principles as these, then, in proportion as these elements are active and dominant (in proportion as I am really conscientious), the question is finally settled for me ; and I take to vegetarianism as an act of faith, it may be with disastrous consequences to my health. But my faith will not consider that ; the decision becomes necessary and binding : " I can no otherwise."

Now in the good individual life, this connexion with a bed-rock of moral certainty is always arrived at, and is always decisive, at any rate in many of the big issues of life. And in the good social life the same thing happens. And, further, the same process is gone through. Every proposal of importance is first put to the test of feeling. We do or do not like the idea of it ; and, obeying a simple impulse of attraction or repulsion, we side with it or oppose it. In some issues of our national life this element of immediate feeling is the

medical expert goes on to tell me that I ought or ought not to eat meat, I do not accept his ruling, any more than I accept that of the economist who tells me that we ought to stick to Free Trade or ought to discard it.

final arbiter, in some questions of peace or war, for instance. In others, it is not final at all, but only the ground of a preliminary judgment. And this preliminary judgment, thus reached, is of course usually a judgment *against* the new proposal, in cases in which the question raised is important and the idea of the change or reform is new. Instinctive feelings of dislike, ranging from mere dislike of a new and untried idea to fierce hatred of what is considered the pernicious tendency of the proposal, checks its progress for a time, or perhaps drives it out of the field of practical politics altogether. And if the proposal is not only new, but quite obviously affects any deep layers of feeling or deep bias of self-interest, then the instinctive opposition will act as a set-back (it may possibly be a salutary set-back) for years or even for generations. Proposals for the abolition of slavery or the enfranchisement of women are cases in point.

But after the preliminary judgment of impulse and feeling, there follows a stage of discussion and reflection. This involves two things : first, an insistent effort to discover what the proposal really entails, to analyse it, expose its probable tendencies, and so trace its connexion with different known elements and values in our life, and lay bare its relation to deeper and deeper layers of instinctive feeling ; and secondly, an attempt to connect it with any scientific systems which may be available, and so to bring the advice of the appropriate experts to bear upon it. Now our judgment may be made decisive by either part of this process. Sometimes discussion and reflection persuade most of us that the

proposal is likely to have effects, not at first suspected, upon some elements of our social life about which we feel very strongly; and according as these effects attract or repel us, so we decide for or against the proposal. Sometimes again, the verdict of the expert is allowed to be decisive, especially in matters about which we are both nervous and ignorant, such as the national health. But in this case it is to be noted that we do not simply accept the dictation of the expert, but incorporate his conclusions (with some of his reasons for them) in our own thought-system, so converting ourselves into quasi-experts. But, just as in the case of the individual judgment described above, so in that of the social judgment, the guidance of the expert is seldom allowed to decide the question authoritatively in any matters which touch the conduct of our life as a whole. We accept his "science" only to mix it in a distorted form with our own ignorance, and so make the judgment really our own. And the basis of knowledge which we may claim to have secured thus becomes a basis of knowledge confused with ignorance, and made still more insecure by the fact that we are quite certain to have selected some facts and rejected others, under the sway of our ingrained prejudices.

But even now, the judgment may not be a final one, and indeed very seldom is. We seek a deeper foundation still. This is reached in one way only, by connecting the proposal with the underlying purposive and moral elements of our schemes of life-values; and also, possibly, with the ideal of a better social state to which all these purposive and moral elements are related.

Grasping or guessing at this or that probable tendency of the proposal, the community brings it to the test of its floating conception of what it needs and wants, of what it believes to be the ultimate aim of its purposes, and above all, in so far as the community is moral, to the test of its conception of right and wrong. Then, and then only, the decision is made final. And in this third stage it will hardly be claimed that knowledge has much to do with the decision. The process becomes merged in the persistent, *impulsive* striving of the community to realize what it imagines to be a better state of itself, in harmony with its conception of the good in the full sense.

And the guarantee of the rightness or safety of the decision is nothing more nor less than the moral worth of the community as a whole—the sanity of its impulses, the trueness of its conception of purpose, the degree to which mere self-interest is subordinated to some kind of an ideal. If the community is morally healthy, its decision may be mistaken (there is no way of preventing that), but is not likely to be harmful. For its mistakes will not long remain uncorrected, simply because their effects will quickly be found to be antagonistic to the realization of the end conceived. But if the community is *not* morally healthy, no amount of knowledge, no acuteness of reasoning, no accumulation of social discoveries, will give soundness or safety to its decisions.

It is easy now to discern the function performed by argument and the discussion of problems, by scientific research and social inquiry, and by the philosopher's

speculations and reasonings. Only by long-continued discussion can any proposal be brought into connexion with the deeper instincts and impulses, the needs and wants, the desires and aims, the life-values and estimates, of individuals or groups or the society as a whole. Only by scientific research and inquiry can our schemes of thought and estimate be widened, deepened, or brought into truer harmony with various important elements in our life. Only by the philosopher's reasonings can the general aims of individual or society be linked to those concepts of a supreme moral end which alone are allowed to be decisive in any good life. In our deliberate judgments, we cannot do without discussion, although our arguments never *prove* a case; we cannot do without all the light which science can give, although no social science can furnish us with authoritative conclusions; we cannot do without the philosopher, although the supreme end to which he points is not demonstrated by his reasonings, but only revealed by faith. And, as in the individual life, so also in the social life, it is *we* who must take the decision—all of us units of the society who are neither logical in our arguments, nor scientific in our knowledge, nor inspired in our faith. Even the most deliberate of our social decisions are still leaps taken in the darkness, in the direction determined by the impulses of our feelings and our faith.

We can now meet the reproach so often levelled at society by the expert or the thinker. Take, for example, the complaint of a leading economist :* that

* Professor Alfred Marshall.

we are continually making decisions fraught with momentous consequences of weal or woe, with less thought than is devoted to the building of a first-class battleship. The reproach rests upon a misunderstanding. The building of a battleship is a matter in which the guidance of the scientific thinker is all-important and is decisive at every step. No one but a fool would attempt even to build a canoe without it. But the decision to have a strong navy, or any other national or social decision whatsoever, belongs to a different category. We have seen that the guidance of scientific experts and thinkers is *not* decisive here, and never can be. We cannot "think the matter out"; if we tried to, we should never come to any decisions at all. It is no reproach to the individual man that he usually makes the most momentous decision in his whole life—the choice of his wife—with less thought than he bestows upon the choice of his golf clubs. He is quite right: were it otherwise, few of us would ever marry. And in the social life also, the decisions are and must always be impulsive. We may agree that both society and the individual ought to "think" more than they do. That follows from what has been said above about the value of discussion, scientific research, and philosophic reasoning. But we will *not* agree that the great decisions of our life, either in matters with which the expert deals, such as industry and health, or in countless other matters which no expert pretends to touch, can or should wait for the same *kind* of thought and scientific guidance as is applicable to the efficient carrying out of details in which the expert is properly supreme.

This brings us back to the practical interest of the reformer, which I confess I have neglected too long. In the early stages of our inquiry we found numerous considerations connected with the physical or vital or mental and social conditioning of our life, which had an obvious bearing upon the problems of reform from which we started. In each department of the inquiry, forces were brought to light with which the reformer has to reckon. He cannot disregard the pressures of physical necessity, the conditions of organic growth and change, the laws of thought and of the spread of thoughts and ideas. Above all, he cannot disregard the conditions which determine the *preparedness for change* in a society subject to these forces. All these considerations pointed to the need of caution and slowness ; and the impatient reformer was probably chafing at every step under the fetters apparently laid upon his zeal, and the disagreeable suggestion that he must move very slowly if he wished to move safely.

But the latter part of our inquiry has brought to light a very different condition of preparedness for change, under which changes of human and social life may be made far more rapidly. When we reach the consciously purposive stage of social development, the possibilities of progress may be enormously quickened, though still subject to the conditions which are so important in the earlier stages. For change is now increasingly motivated by the conception of a better social state, presented to the minds of agents who are growingly conscious of their power to realize that better state if they will, and to make themselves prepared for

its realization. Just as the life of an individual may be "converted" in apparent defiance of environmental hindrances, so the life of society might be changed with a rapidity which would be quite impossible in the earlier stages. For the spiritual force of the true individual, who is the reality in every social unit, has a practically limitless power on the higher levels of life. We say "*might* be changed," because a real conversion is never a probability. But it is at least a possibility, and the reformer has so far a justification for his hope that society may be saved even in his generation. He has, at any rate, a right to proclaim his intention to try to reform it in this direction or in that—to make the drunkard sober, the dirty clean, the lazy industrious, the selfish considerate, the oppressors just. No law which asserts the slowness of cosmic or organic evolution, and the gradualness of natural change of habit or mental attitude, entitles us to call his hope delusive or his aim foolish. It is not *likely* that society will reform itself quickly; but it is not impossible. And it is at least certain that, though hurry is a dangerous foe to progress, excess of caution and want of confidence are no less dangerous.

A further justification of the reformer's impatience is found in our final conclusion. Society does *not* move on to better things by thought and reasoning and knowledge of its path. It moves by the impulse of a sound life, with faith in the ideal for its guide. Every true reformer is the expression of a healthy moral impulse and the lantern-bearer of new faith. We may say, and must say, that he will not be a true reformer if

he disregards any of the thought or the knowledge or the reasoning within his grasp; but there is no inconsistency in saying also that these cannot and will not weaken the impulse which he honestly expresses, nor lessen the faith in which he finds his inspiration. His vision of a better future, in which he intensely believes, is his to hold against every scientist or expert or social dogmatist; for progress comes from visions and the faith in them, not from any elaborate charts of social causation.

In this final conclusion two implications are involved, both, perhaps, unpalatable to most people, but both urgently requiring emphasis. The one concerns the reformer's position, and the way in which he must be content to work; the other concerns his and our estimate of the relative importance of the different elements involved in social reform. It is clear that the reformer of to-day is increasingly called upon to work through public opinion and the impulses of the people, leading to change of law and so to alteration of the social structure and the social mechanism. However far advanced he may be in wisdom or goodness, he cannot now claim authority to ordain this change or that for the good of his society. The day of the wise law-giver has passed; our modern society can expect no Solon or Lycurgus to direct it, no Confucius or Manu or Moses to make its laws, no philosopher-king or priest-king to rule it. The true aristocrat, wherever he exists, must use a different method, for society is no longer in its childhood, moving unconsciously along lines laid down for its safety. Its units are beginning to be

wide-awake, interested, alert, reflective, critical, living as free citizens, not merely functioning as custom-bound cells; living, too, as conscious co-operators in a social life whose moving complexity is in sharp contrast to the fixed simplicity of earlier days. It is easy for a parent to direct a family of young children; but the condition changes entirely as the children one by one grow nearer manhood, and the family life becomes amplified and diversified as each new mind and will takes its place as a conscious part of the guiding force of the whole. So in modern society. It is not merely that activities increase in all directions, covering a field so vast that no one mind can grasp it; but, even more important, the number of groups and individuals consciously competing and co-operating, struggling and desiring, willing and aspiring, becomes so vast as to turn the social process into a new thing, no longer to be regulated or controlled by any one or two individuals or groups. This is the unanswerable defence of democratic rule. We may hate it, if we please; but there is no alternative. Even a Solon would probably abdicate as soon as he grasped the conditions of social change to-day.

This, then, is the reformer's position. To begin with, he is but one among a thousand schemers; his plan of reform is but one among a thousand competing conceptions of social betterment. He must follow his vision, believing it to be the best, but never *knowing* it to be right. His aim is to get something *done*, for the good of the people. But the decision rests with the people, not with him. They are the real doers, as well

as the judges of what shall be done. Every problem he touches has a million strands of interest, spreading not only into every department of state and municipality, but into every kitchen and nursery, home and workshop. It is the people themselves who must "solve" the problem, and live out the solution as best they can, each unit learning in the process the primary lessons of social responsibility, of citizen duty, of neighbour duty. The reformer throws his vision of progress before them—a vision for him, clearly seen and confidently held, but for them only a rather confused suggestion of change, presented side by side with many competing suggestions. And as such they accept or reject it, bringing it to the test of their varied experiences and felt needs, their innumerable desires and hopes and fears. They are not good judges, in any ordinary sense. The reformer may have spent months or years of thought upon his scheme; they perhaps spend but a few odd moments. And their judgment is, no doubt, often wholly wrong; at any rate it will seem so to posterity. But there is no other way. They form the only court of appeal; the touchstone of their general social impulse is the sole criterion. The wisest reformer has no right to say: "*I know* this or that change is best;"—though this is exactly what he *does* say, thus instinctively proclaiming his faith to be also knowledge. But he is only entitled to say: "*I believe* this to be best; it is the outcome of my best efforts as a thinking and willing citizen. You others must set your thoughts and wills to work upon it, and say whether I am right or not."

Now, in the light of all this, what is it which is of real importance in the reformer's proposals? Usually, he is intently bent upon his scheme as a scheme, and upon the details of social change which it proposes. He says in effect: "This is the method by which your children shall be fed, your poor relieved, your industry reformed, your diseases prevented. Alter this law; make this new provision; change this bit of the social machinery, and all will be well." But unless our whole estimate of the significance of the social process is at fault, these are *not* the important things. If they were, we might be pessimists indeed, for of their rightness or wrongness there is never any guarantee, nor any test except the experience of their working, which is yet to come. They are all concerned with the perfecting of the social structure, in some way or other; and the perfecting of the social structure, like the perfecting of each man's physical body, is important only as a means to something beyond. Just as I rightly pay attention to my physical health and strength, because such attention is part of my whole duty to my environment, and a necessary condition of any real progress; so also we all rightly strive to improve our great body, society, partly because this constant effort is an invaluable form of the training which social life affords, and partly because an improved environment, which we ourselves have constantly striven to make better, is the necessary stepping-stone to any kind of better life. But—and this is the important point to note—it is of no real moment whether or not *our* efforts succeed or are thwarted; whether or not *our* ideas are accepted or

tossed aside. Indeed, it does not profoundly matter whether or not the social structure is really made more perfect—in our view; for, after all, part of its very excellence, as an environment, lies in the difficulties it contains, and it is probable that these will continue to exist, and perhaps increase, in spite of all our reforms. Of this, more will be said in a moment; but we may at any rate assert now that the important matter in all improvement is the *will* to reform, and the effort to improve, the social environment in which our neighbours struggle, rather than the results of the will and effort; and the object of all improvement is, not to give our neighbours or ourselves an easier time or a more comfortable life, but to give ourselves and them a better opportunity to develop all our personalities along the lines which lead towards the realization of our true individualities.

Much of this must seem a hard doctrine. I admit it is unpalatable, for it sets the seal of uncertainty upon all our thought-out policies. I admit it is paradoxical too. The reformer who is really in earnest and likely to be effective, cannot help feeling that he knows better than his unthinking neighbours. And he is right; he *does* know better; yet he does not really *know* at all. But the doctrine, unpalatable and paradoxical as it must appear, is the only possible basis for healthy optimism. As a sensible citizen, with strong views, I am quite certain that my society is making numerous mistakes. As a social philosopher, I am equally certain that *I* cannot really improve upon them. But, as a reformer, I insist upon trying to do

so—only to be constantly disappointed, doomed to find most of my warnings disregarded, my schemes rejected, my policies despised. Is this a cause for despondency? Not in the least, upon two conditions : first, that I am able to take a sane view of the value of my own convictions ; secondly, that I am able to assure myself that my neighbours' aim and purpose are as single as my own.

The first condition is a small matter. Of course I am disgusted, as every keen citizen is, that my society should be so stupid as to fly in the face of all that I tell it is necessary and wise. Possibly I go about for a while assuring every one that the country is going to the dogs. But a very little philosophy is enough to bring me to a more balanced view. Every country is always going to the dogs, in the opinion of many of its sturdiest citizens ; but it seldom gets there. And, granted that it *is* wrong and that I am right in this or that particular policy, this is a matter which cannot possibly be determined beforehand. I do my best ; I give of my best—of right feeling and thought and effort to persuade others and point out the way to them. The people will have none of my advice or guidance. Very well : let them follow their own guidance ; and let me, as their fellow-citizen still, take up again the task of making the best of what is, and trying to find and point out once more, in the new conditions, the better way which every good citizen is always busying himself to discover.

But the second condition is obviously a more serious matter. Perhaps the consideration of it will

indicate the degree of assurance which, as reformers, we may hope to obtain in reference to any proposed changes, and may also help us to estimate finally the relative importance of the spirit of reform and of the results of reform.

It is, beyond question, possible for me, as an individual, to know whether my own purpose or aim or end is good or not ; often, too, it is possible to know whether the purpose or aim or end of my society is good. We are trying to lessen the poverty of the poor, let us say ; *I* think this must be done in one way ; my society chooses a different way. I, perhaps, believe that the end can be gained only by a slow process of moral education of all classes ; my society, perhaps, decides upon some quicker and easier methods—such as change of industrial or social machinery, or devices of taxation and provision of resources which to me may seem but a churning up of the very complexities we had best leave alone. No matter ; *I* am certainly not the pivot of the social impulse, nor am I conscious of a thousandth part of all the pushes and pulls which determine it. Let the society which feels them all decide its own course ; and I will do my best, with all other decent citizens, to make the new order work for good. But this I *know*—if I am honest with myself—that the purpose for which my rejected scheme of reform was devised was a true social purpose, aiming at the end of whose validity I have more certainty than knowledge can give ; a purpose not selfish, not biased by the narrow interests of my class, not limited in its range to any acquisition of wealth or comfort

or material benefit—not even of wealth or comfort or benefit for all ; but true in the sense that it is aimed at the only complete good of our social life, namely, the perfecting of society in such a way as that every social relation, every social activity, every social institution, shall offer to each willing citizen adequate opportunity of learning fully the lessons which the social process has to teach, the lessons which begin in the development of *all* social, and therefore not wholly self-centred, interests, and end in the freedom of the individual from any self-interests at all.

Moreover, society may have the same assurance of certainty as to its purpose, if it chooses. At present, in most of its decisions, it is thinking chiefly of loaves and fishes, or of escape from difficulties and burdens—just as I am ; in other words, it is aiming usually at that goal of greater satisfaction and less dissatisfaction which recedes just in proportion as we consciously struggle to reach it. But even so, it can know whether it is aiming in such a way as to bring its purpose into harmony with the true purpose. Sometimes there is not the least doubt that society is honestly trying to open out life, not for itself, but for some unconsidered or perhaps unconscious part of itself, for its slaves or submerged members, for example, or for the posterity whose gain is not *its* present gain ; sometimes again there is equally little doubt that we are merely trying to get rid of an unpleasant difficulty with as little sacrifice as may be, or to gain a coveted satisfaction with the least possible trouble. In the one case, the effort at reform, however mistaken in method, is saved from futility or any real danger by

the honesty of its purpose ; in the other case, even good luck in the choice of method will not save us from disappointment. In the one case, we may stumble woefully and bruise ourselves against all sorts of unexpected obstacles, but we shall be moving forward even in our falls. In the other case, we are not going anywhere at all, however smooth we may find the road—at the moment. And in the former case we have this very certain consolation : if the movement is really a forward one, the mishaps and falls are not of any consequence. We shall learn something from them ; they can take nothing of value from us. Goodwill will have been increased—a gain worth many falls ; social life will have become more buoyant and more wholesome, though perhaps not more easy. And just herein lies our chief illusion, and the source of most of our disappointments and fears. We aim at making social life more perfect—the right aim, of course. But we interpret this to mean that social life is to be made easier, simpler, pleasanter—qualities which have nothing to do with the true purpose. We know, of course, that society will never be perfected, any more than will any of our environments, from our bodies to our Churches. But we refuse to see that this continuing imperfection is a necessary part of their excellence as material for our wills to work upon. We think that by our hygienic and therapeutic ingenuities we are going to make society healthy ; by our economic ingenuities, to make it better off ; by our political ingenuities, to make it contented. If these desirable results occur, it will not be from these causes, nor from any ingenuities whatever. Most probably they will not

occur : we may escape from cholera and typhus only to find our health threatened by greater nervous instability ; we may increase wealth tenfold, only to find a growing consciousness of want permeating our whole community ; we may establish good government and good management, only to find unsuspected forms of social unrest producing new and harder problems of social adjustment. For that is the way with our ingenuities ; they are never quite ingenious enough to solve any of the problems of life. But in the face of goodwill and honest effort guided by true purpose, the problems one by one disappear ; or, if they remain, perhaps remain rather as safeguards than as hindrances. And this is the philosopher's final lesson : to learn that what is of importance is not the reform, but the will that prompts it ; not the improvement of social 'machinery, but the resolve that machinery shall be improved until all are helped by it ; not the results achieved by our devices, but the effort to achieve something good for the use of our fellow-citizens. If the reformer dislikes this doctrine, let him remember that it is after all but a corollary from the assumption which we took as our foundation, namely, that the supreme purpose of human life, whether individual or social, is a spiritual purpose, even as the sole interpretation of its significance is a religious interpretation. For this means that all actions derive their value from the part they play in the working out of the spiritual process, not from their immediate or apparent effects upon the social process. In the spiritual scale of values it is not the success of the treatment applied by the good Samaritan which counts for

much—any more than it is the actual purchasing power of the two mites given by a poor widow ; but simply the fact that the one did his best in the spirit of neighbourliness, and the other gave her all in the spirit of sacrifice.

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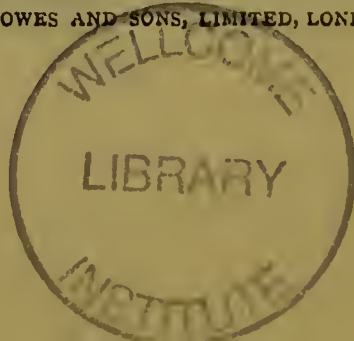
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